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1.0 Rural Ararat Heritage Study Executive Summary

1.1 Introduction

The Rural Ararat Heritage Study was commissioned by the Ararat Rural City Council in two stages between 2011 and 2016. The study area for the heritage study was that area of the municipality of Ararat Rural City not included in the 1994 City of Ararat Heritage Study.

Dr Robyn Ballinger of History in the Making was commissioned as the lead consultant for both stages of the Study. Project team members were Samanatha Westbrook, Heritage Architect, Tom Henty, photographer and fieldworker, and Eleanor Hambleton, who undertook data entry.

A steering committee was established to guide the study.

1.2 Project objectives

The objectives of the Rural Ararat Heritage Study Stage 1 were to:

• prepare a Thematic Environmental History of post-contact settlement and development of the study area;
• identify all post-contact places of potential cultural significance in the study area; and
• estimate the resources required to appropriately research, document and assess those post-contact places of potential cultural significance that were considered worthy of future conservation and to complete Stage 2 of the project.

The objectives of the Rural Ararat Heritage Study Stage 2 were to:

• assess and document the places of post-contact cultural significance identified as being worthy of future conservation in Stage 1 of the project;
• enter this information into the HERMES database to be provided to the client;
• review and finalise the Thematic Environmental History; and
• make recommendations for the conservation of the municipality’s cultural heritage.

1.3 Assessment of cultural significance

The values used in the identification and assessment of places of cultural significance were historic, scientific, aesthetic, social and spiritual values as articulated in the Australia ICOMOS Burra Charter. Detailed assessment for heritage places in the study area was developed against key themes articulated in the Thematic Environmental History and the HERCON criteria. Thresholds applied included ‘State Significance’ and ‘Local Significance’.

1.4 Community consultation

Community consultation formed an integral part of the Heritage Study, with consultants facilitating and attending community meetings; working with local historical societies; organising fieldtrips with residents to identify places of heritage interest; inviting feedback on the Thematic Environmental History from community members; seeking input into priority places for assessment in Stage 2; and incorporating community feedback on place and precinct citations into the Study. The community engagement program was vital to documenting the municipality’s unique history and heritage.
1.5 Study results

1.5.1 Individual places

The following table provides a summary of the key findings and recommendations for the 103 individual places assessed in Stage 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendation</th>
<th>Number of places</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recommended for inclusion in the Ararat Planning Scheme</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommended that assessment documentation for places already in the Heritage Overlay be incorporated in the Ararat Planning Scheme</td>
<td>2 places</td>
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<tr>
<td>Recommended for inclusion in the Victorian Heritage Inventory</td>
<td>5 places</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

1.5.2 Heritage precincts

A total of 3 heritage precincts in Willaura were identified, assessed and documented in Stage 2 and recommended for the Heritage Overlay.

1.6 Recommendations

1.6.1 Adoption of the Rural Ararat Heritage Study

It is recommended that Ararat Rural City Council adopt the Rural Ararat Heritage Study.

1.6.2 Statutory protection

It is recommended that the individual places identified, assessed and documented in the Rural Ararat Heritage Study be included in or nominated for the following statutory registers:

- 103 places (outside of heritage precincts) recommended for inclusion in the Planning Scheme.
- 5 places recommended for inclusion in the Victorian Heritage Inventory.

It is recommended that assessment documentation for 2 places already in the Heritage Overlay of the Planning Scheme be adopted.

It is recommended that the 3 precincts identified, assessed and documented in Willaura be included in the Planning Scheme.

It is recommended that an amendment to the Planning Scheme that makes changes and/or additions to the Heritage Overlay to incorporate the recommended places and precincts, as well as assessment documentation provided for places already in the Heritage Overlay, be prepared and implemented as soon as practicable.

It is recommended that the specific heritage policies and objectives detailed for the recommended heritage precincts (Heritage Overlay Areas) be implemented by Ararat Rural City Council.

1.6.3 Public awareness program

It is recommended that Ararat Rural City Council consider ways to promote the rich and diverse heritage values of the municipality.

It is recommended that Ararat Rural City Council consider ways to provide assistance and advice to property owners affected by the amendment to the Planning Scheme.
1.6.4 Heritage Strategy

It is recommended that Ararat Rural City Council prepare a four-year Heritage Strategy as per Heritage Victoria’s information guide titled *Local Government Heritage Strategies*.

1.6.5 Further work

It is recommended that Ararat Rural City Council:

- reviews the 8 historical archaeological sites identified in the Heritage Study;
- reviews the places already listed in the Heritage Overlay of the Ararat Planning Scheme to ensure they have the required level of documentation; and
- continues the process of assessment according to the priority place lists provided in Stage 1.

1.7 Study format

The Rural Ararat Heritage Study comprises four volumes, introduced by the Executive Summary:

- Volume 1 Key Findings and Recommendations;
- Volume 2 Heritage Precinct Policies;
- Volume 3 Heritage Place and Precinct Citations. This volume is divided into three sections: Section 1 - Citations for places recommended for the Planning Scheme; Section 2 - Citations for places already on the Planning Scheme; and Section 3 - Citations for Heritage Precincts; and
- Volume 4 the Thematic Environmental History.
2.0 **Introduction to Heritage Place and Precinct Citations Report**

The Heritage Place and Precincts Citations report is divided into three sections:

- Section 1 – Citations for places recommended for the Ararat Planning Scheme, including places recommended for the Victorian Heritage Register and Victorian Heritage Inventory;
- Section 2 – Citations for places already on the Ararat Planning Scheme; and
- Section 3 – Citations for Heritage Precincts.

2.1 **Section 1 – Citations for places recommended for the Ararat Planning Scheme, including places recommended for the Victorian Heritage Inventory**

The table below provides an index by township/district to Section 1. (HO=Heritage Overlay; VHI=Victorian Heritage Inventory)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Place name</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Tship/district</th>
<th>Recommendations</th>
<th>Section 1 page no.</th>
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<td>Westmere</td>
<td>HO</td>
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<td>Teacher’s Residence</td>
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<tr>
<td>Former St Andrews Presbyterian Church, Sunday</td>
<td>38 School Road</td>
<td>Westmere</td>
<td>HO</td>
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<tr>
<td>School Hall, Fence and Pines</td>
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<td>Cast Iron Milepost</td>
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<td>Wickliffe</td>
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<td>Wickliffe</td>
<td>HO</td>
<td>650</td>
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<tr>
<td>Western Hotel and Bluestone Stables</td>
<td>62 Walker Street</td>
<td>Wickliffe</td>
<td>HO</td>
<td>657</td>
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<tr>
<td>Residence</td>
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<td>HO</td>
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<td>Willaura</td>
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<td>'Wongalee’ Residence, Pines and Canary Island</td>
<td>334 Back Bolac Road</td>
<td>Willaura</td>
<td>HO</td>
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<td>Palm</td>
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<td>Willaura</td>
<td>HO</td>
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<td>Willaura District Hospital, Gates and Trees</td>
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<td>Willaura</td>
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<td>and Oak Tree</td>
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<td>‘Yooranalee’ Farm Complex and Oaks</td>
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<td>Willaura</td>
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<td>Willaura Memorial Hall</td>
<td>Main Street</td>
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<td>Willaura</td>
<td>HO</td>
<td>760</td>
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<td>Willaura Uniting Church</td>
<td>6 Warranooke Street</td>
<td>Willaura</td>
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<td>Willaura Railway Station Complex</td>
<td>Wickliffe-Willaura Road</td>
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<td>Former Yalla Y Poora State School No. 4756</td>
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<td>Yalla Y Poora</td>
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### 2.2 Section 2 – Citations for places already on the Ararat Planning Scheme

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<td>2994 Moyston-Dunkeld Road</td>
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### 2.3 Section 3 – Citations for Heritage Precincts recommended for the Ararat Planning Scheme

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<td>Willaura Main Street Residential Heritage Precinct</td>
<td>96-110 Main Street, Willaura</td>
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**Name**  
Willaura Anglican Church Precinct

**Address**  
14-20 Delacombe Way WILLAURA

**Place Type**  
Bell Tower, Church, Sunday School, Presbytery/Rectory/Vicarage/Manse

**Citation Date**  
2015

**Assessment by**  
Robyn Ballinger and Samantha Westbrooke

---

**Recommended Heritage Protection**  
VHR No HI No PS Yes

---

**History and Historical Context**

**Contextual History**

Willaura is located on the traditional lands of the Tjapwurong Aboriginal peoples.[1]

Governor of New South Wales, Sir Richard Bourke, instructed Surveyor General Thomas Mitchell to finish tracing the course of the Darling River to the Murray River, to survey the Murray to its junction with the Murrumbidgee River, and then to follow the southern bank of the Murray back to the settled parts of New South Wales. After crossing the Murray River near present-day Boundary Bend, Mitchell ignored his official instructions and explored instead the northern and western areas of the Port Phillip District (later the Colony of Victoria), a region he titled ‘Australia Felix’.

Mitchell travelled through what was to become the municipality of Ararat Rural City in July and September 1836. On the
return to Sydney, Mitchell's expedition made camp on 19 September 1836 to the west of a hill Mitchell named Mount Stavely. Mitchell named the Hopkins River on the same day. The expedition set up camp on 20 September, south of today's Willaura, at the eastern end of a line of 50 salt lakes, which Mitchell called Cockajemmy Lakes.[2]

Mitchell's exploratory expedition through the area is marked by the names he gave to the country and by a cairn on the Willaura-Wickliffe Road erected by the Willaura and District Historical Society and unveiled in 1986.

As in other parts of the Port Phillip District, squatters took up large tracts of Crown land (public land) in the area to graze mainly sheep from 1837.[3] The first squatters came from Van Diemen's land via Geelong and Portland Bay, which was occupied by the Henty family in 1834. Soon after overlanders from north of the Murray River arrived. This second wave of squatters was attracted by favorable newspaper reports of Mitchell's 'Australia Felix'. It has been estimated that two-thirds of the pioneer settlers in Western Victoria were from Scotland; nearly all were Lowland farmers.[4]

The two major runs in what was to become known as the Wickliffe Road (Willaura) district were Mount William, 38,000 acres taken up by Thomas Chirnside in 1842; and Greenvale, 56,880 acres taken up by Robert Adams in 1843.[5] These runs contributed to the establishment of a significant wool growing industry in the district.

The Duffy Land Act, passed in June 1862, put aside ten million acres of land in designated 'agricultural areas', which were surveyed into 40-640 acre allotments. Over 1,888,000 acres in the Colony of Victoria were alienated under the 1862 Act,[6] but mostly into the hands of the squatters. Approximately 250,000 acres between Ararat, Stratham and Wickliffe, and 107,500 acres between Fiery Creek and the Hopkins River, were made available in 1862.[7] Allotments were taken up in the district of what was to become Wickliffe Road (Willaura).

Salt for stock was extracted by Henry Wileman from the Cockajemmy lakes south of present-day Willaura from 1866 to 1889. By 1883, two salt factories had been established. So large was the working population at the lakes, a school was petitioned for in 1885. The Biggins family took over the industry in 1889 and operated it through until the 1980s.[10]

In 1883, the Wickliffe Road settlement, on the Ararat-Portland railway line, had a population of 30, two salt factories to the south, a hotel, a part-time school, a store, a few cottages, and a railway station. In 1890, Wickliffe Road State School had 55 pupils in attendance.

With the advent of share farming from 1897 on Mount William and Edgarley, rapid progress was made in the district. The Wickliffe Road State School was enlarged to about three times its original size and the Colonial Bank opened a branch in the township.
By the 1890s, children of selectors in the Colony of Victoria wanting to take up farming were left with only the Mallee country. As a consequence, pressure was applied to the government to make existing large land-holdings available as small farms. Planning for the 1904 Closer Settlement Act provided further impetus for the owners of large pastoral properties in the municipality to introduce their own closer settlement schemes. The owners of the Mount William run made 100 to 300-acre blocks for cultivation available to share and tenant farmers in 1897, with a further 18,000 acres released in 1902. The owners of Greenvale offered tenant farmers three-year leases.[14] In addition, Thomas Millear advertised land for sharefarming on Edgarley (a subdivision of Greenvale) in 1899, and by 1910 there were 23 tenant farmers on the property.[15]

Arthur Murphy, an Ararat businessman, operated as an agent for the owners of pastoral properties. Murphy subdivided a number of properties in the Lake Bolac and Wickliffe Road districts in the early 1900s for the owners, and recruited settlers from the northern districts of the Colony of Victoria with experience in wheat farming to take up the land.[16] In 1902, Murphy sold 16,000 acres of Greenvale and subdivided it into allotments of about 320 acres. Some of the land adjoined the Wickliffe Road Railway Station. In June of the same year, Murphy sold another 9,000 acres of Greenvale for Charles Ayrey, who had purchased the land with a view to subdivision. This land included a township site, which was later named Willaura, close to the Wickliffe Road Railway Station.[17] As part of this development, land situated opposite the Wickliffe Road railway station was subdivided into township blocks. Buyers from Melbourne, Bendigo and the Wimmera paid up to Â£45 for one quarter of an acre facing the railway reserve.[18] Before the end of the month, builders were erecting shops and houses. Ayrey wanted to name the town after himself, but this never eventuated.[19]

By 1903, 75,000 acres of former grazing land in the Lake Bolac-Willaura district had been brought under cultivation[20] locating Wickliffe Road township at the centre of a substantial wheat-growing district.

Wickliffe Road township was renamed Willaura on 1 August 1905 and a police station was established in the township in 1906.

The newspaper, the Willaura Farmer, commenced operation on 1 June 1906, and described Willaura at that time: 'It includes the Junction Hotel, Incledon's coffee palace, dining rooms, three blacksmith's establishments, two fruiterers [and] three general stores'.[21]

The sale of Mount William estate in October 1906 resulted in further subdivision with farms sold at between Â£6-Â£7 an acre. Thomas Wileman also subdivided his land to the north of Warranooke Street, Willaura, into quarter acre lots and sold the blocks in the period 1906-08. Land sales and leasing of land to farmers in the district transformed Wickliffe Road into a busy township.

Willaura was described by the Willaura Farmer on 1 June 1907:

Business houses which have been erected during the past twelve months include a general store, a baker's shop, a butcher's shop, a bootmaker's shop, two fruit palaces, two millinery and dressmaking establishments, two machinery depots, and a fertiliser shed. This, it must be admitted, is a wonderful record for a township which in 1900 was comprised of five families. During the past year Willaura has gained a new post office. The Railway Department has not been slow to recognise Willaura's progress. A new shunting line and siding for wheat stacking has been established to cope with the increased grain traffic. The department has given further evidence of its firm belief in the stability of the district by erecting a new and commodious dwelling for the stationmaster, and will shortly convert the old residence into an up-to-date railway station. A police station is now in course of erection, and the time is not far distant when the police court will be held locally. Saleyards were established locally during the year, and stock sales are now conducted regularly in the town. The drainage of the town has been sadly neglected, and a windmill has been erected presumably to annoy the townspeople. The drainage question is still demanding the attention of the Shire Council, which is being spurred into action by the Public Health Department at the instance of the Progress Association.[22]
A horseracing club was formed in 1907. As the township was located near a large swamp, drainage in the town posed an ongoing problem.

Gold mining was taken up on a small scale in the Willaura district at Half Way Gully in July 1906. Miners cut through a sandstone bar on the Hopkins River to divert water for the washing and sluicing of gold.[23] The Kiora Gold Mining Company was formed in 1907, and in 1914, after Willaura district residents petitioned the Minister for Mines, the Director of the Geological Survey visited the area to report on the advisability of testing for gold leads. It seems little prospecting activity took place after his visit.[24]

In 1909, eighty allotments were made available by the sale of ten acres of Thomas Wileman's land on the north side of the township. The sale realised Â£864 10s, or an average of Â£54 per acre.[25]

Willaura became an important receival centre for grain, and in 1910 was the second biggest in the western half of Victoria.[26] Field trials of H V McKay farm equipment were held in the Willaura and Westmere districts from 1907 until 1953, including, in 1907, trials of the Sunshine Push Harvester, so called because the machine was pushed by eight horses attached to the rear.[27]

Farming land at Willaura was converted to a recreation reserve in 1910 when a committee placed a notice in the Willaura Farmer calling for designs for a reserve including tennis courts, cricket, football and sports ground with grandstand and tree plantings.[28] By 1911, the township included two banks, police station, courthouse and a weekly newspaper.[29] Willaura Township was proclaimed in 1912.[30] A golf course opened in 1913.

After fires in 1912 and 1916 burnt down buildings in Willaura, residents formed a fire brigade to protect the township.

Approximately 90 returned soldiers from World War One took up portions of five estates in the municipality. The largest settlement was on the Narrapumelap and Cowaugh estate, where 14,000 acres were divided into 37 farms, including land in the Willaura district on Back Bolac Road. However, because of the small size of allotments allocated, less than 50 per cent of the original soldier settlers made a success of their farms.[31]

Farmers and graziers in the area were well placed to take advantage of the economic boom conditions of post World War One. By the 1920s, crop rotation techniques, the use of superphosphate and the introduction of improved wheat varieties facilitated a marked increase in wheat yields in the district.[32] In addition, wheat was cultivated on an extensive scale with tractors and the motorised header-harvester - a machine that was able to reap a crop before it was fully ripe, harvest a knocked down crop, and separate straw and grain. Wool also reached high prices in the 1920s. Wool from Yalla-y-Poora, for instance, made a world record of 51s. Â½ d. in 1924, which stood as an Australasian record for twenty years.[33]

The Willaura Sun newspaper closed in 1921. Premises to house the Willaura fire station were constructed next to the post office in 1922. The Willaura Bush Fire Brigade was formed in 1933. From 1938, Dr Cyril Checchi, who had arrived in Willaura in 1920, led a movement to get a water supply for the township, which at that stage relied on dams and rainwater tanks. A bush nursing hospital was opened at Willaura in 1935. Electric light was connected to the township in 1938. On January 14 1944, a fire from the Grampians travelled towards Glenthompson and Lake Bolac. Three homesteads and 8,000 sheep were lost in the Willaura police district in the blaze.[34]

For the most part closer settlement as an active government policy was wound down from 1938, however another phase of soldier settlement commenced after World War Two. In the municipality, because of larger blocks and more intensive support and training, this scheme was more successful than that which followed World War One. Soldier settlement was facilitated with the assistance of Returned Sailors' Soldiers' and Airmens Imperial Leagues (RSSAILAs). The Willaura RSSAILA Sub-Branch submitted a list of properties totalling 25,600 acres that it deemed suitable for settlement, including land on Edgarley, Narrapumelap, Yarram Park and Toora. It was also noted that homesteads at Berrambool,
Narrapumelap and Burumbeep stood vacant.[35] Subsequently, 120 former servicemen settled on 80,000 acres excised from eight large properties in the Willaura-Streatham-Wickliffe area: Burrumbeep, Narrapumelap, Berrambool, Yalla-y-Poora, Blythvale, Edgarley, Nerrin Nerrin and Bushy Creek, where they mostly took up grazing and mixed farming.[36] In addition, a portion of the Edgarley, 5,101 acres near the Willaura township, was subdivided in 1946 into eight allotments. The land was described as suitable for sheep grazing, mixed farming and cereal growing by the Soldier Settlement Commission.[37] A Soldier Settlement office was established in Willaura to facilitate the settlement. Berrambool, Narrapumelap and Burumbeep homesteads provided temporary housing for settler families whilst other housing was constructed. Today, plaques mark soldier settlement estates at Berrambool, Edgarley, Burrumbeep, Trawalla South and Nerrin Nerrin.

The phase of soldier settlement corresponded with good seasons, the post World War Two economic boom, and, from 1940, 'ley' farming (where crop planting is alternated with a forage legume for grazing, such as clover), which greatly increased wool production and wheat yields per acre.[38] This era brought significant wealth and growth to Willaura. The Moyston-Willaura Road became known locally as 'Toorak Road' because of the substantial homes and farms established there during this period.[39] With the economic boom and growth in district population following World War Two, a number of projects were undertaken in Willaura: a reticulated water supply was established in 1949; the Country Fire Authority built a new fire station in 1956; the Willaura Memorial Hall opened in 1957, and new classrooms, staffroom and office were constructed at Willaura State School in the same year, with another classroom added in 1964.[40] An Infant Welfare Centre opened in 1959. A scout hall was built in the early 1960s.

Tamara Beggs and Malcolm Fraser, later Prime Minister of Australia, were married at the All Saints Anglican Church in Willaura in 1956.

The Victorian Grain Elevators Board, established in 1935, introduced bulk-handling facilities for wheat; in the 1939-40 season the Board commenced operations as the sole bulk handler of wheat. Concrete silos and weighbridges were erected at railway stations, followed by steel silos constructed by the Grain Elevators Board to handle the bumper crops of the 1950s and 1960s. In the 1962-63 season, wheat deliveries at silos at Tatyoon measured 271,711 bushels; at Westmere 408,584 bushels; and at Willaura 350,218 bushels. Steel silos were built at Willaura in 1963. Bulk handling of oats commenced in 1962 and a number of oats storage sheds were built in the study area, including a shed at the Willaura railway station complex in 1964.[41]

The construction of a six million gallon service basin, named the Checchi Reservoir, was undertaken in 1962 to improve water supplies to Willaura and other townships. A swimming pool opened in 1965. Willaura was connected to sewerage in 1966. Housing Commission Elderly Citizen flats were erected in 1973.[42]

Major extensions to the hospital were undertaken in 1976 and the nursing hostel was built in 1994.

Fires occurred in the Grampians in 2006, when 26 homes, 129,000 hectares of land, thousands of stock and fences were burnt. Begun by a lightning strike on 19 January 2006, on 22 January the fire spread rapidly in a southerly direction towards Dunkeld, reaching the outskirts of Willaura before a strong wind took the fire back in a northward direction, affecting a number of small communities along the eastern side of the Grampians. A man and his son died between Moyston and Pomonal when they were caught in the fire. A memorial has been erected near the place they died. In Willaura, the cenotaph was refurbished in memory of the 2006 fire.

In recent years, Grain Corp has established grain bunker facilities at Willaura.

Aggregation of farms into larger holdings from the 1960s has resulted in an ongoing reduction of population in the district. With the removal from Willaura of major employers such as the PMG, the railways, and the Ararat Shire depot in the 1980s, this trend has continued. Today cropping and wool growing are still the district's mainstays, and while many of the town's shops and former businesses have closed, there remains a strong community and a range of essential
services. [43]

**Precinct History [44]**

As part of the Ballarat Diocese, the first record of Church of England worship at Wickliffe Road (later Willaura) was on 1 March 1903. There were forty in the congregation and the service was provided by the Reverend G S Home. Early records show that services were held in the public hall in Willaura and occasionally in the Edgarley run wool shed.

The first vicarage was built in 1906 in Warranooke Street, on land that was owned and subdivided by Thomas Wileman. The church committee purchased Lot 7 for £20, and Wileman donated Lots 8 and 9 for the church site. A church building fund was subsequently established.

In December 1909, the Church of England Willaura Parochial District (including Wickliffe and Lake Bolac) became the Willaura Parish.

By 1910 enough money had been raised to build the Willaura church, however the project was deferred when Thomas Millear offered another site for the church and vicarage on land he owned, and also offered to contribute a quarter of the cost of the church. Subsequently the former vicarage was sold for £400 and the church site for £72.

The building of the All Saints Church and vicarage in Edgarley Road commenced in 1910. The construction of the vicarage cost £496 5s and the church £574. A. P. Daniel, architect of Willaura, drew up plans for a timber church building with a corrugated iron roof. The church consisted of a chancel, measuring 15 feet 6 inches by 17 feet; a nave, measuring 25 feet by 33 feet; and a corridor, measuring 10 feet by 25 feet. [45] M. Gilmour won the contract to build the church, vicarage and stable, and C. Baker erected a fence around the church at a cost of £59 5s. The stable cost £40 to construct. The church opened in November 1910.

The All Saints Church was consecrated by Bishop Green on 8 February, 1911.

A church guild was formed in 1912 and took on fund raising, cleaning and catering activities. An Honour Roll was unveiled in the church on 27 April 1919.

In 1939, M. Bulte, builder and contractor of Ararat, drew up plans for a hall for the All Saints Church of England. The building consisted of redgum foundations, corrugated iron roof, cement sheeting walls, nine sash windows, a stage, chimney, a hall measuring 24 feet by 40 feet, and kitchen measuring 8 feet by 14 feet. However, because of the church's financial constraints, H. W. Wormersley, timber and hardware merchant of Willaura, did not commence construction of the hall until late 1940. The official opening took place in 1948. [46]

In 1955, a belfry and bell (the bell was manufactured in London and bore the inscription 'A. D. M. G. In memory of Rosa Elizabeth Millear') were erected by the Millear family in memory of their mother.

The marriage of Tamara Beggs and Malcolm Fraser, who was Prime Minister of Australia from 1975 until 1983, was celebrated on 9 December 1956 at the church.

On 24 August 1981, the Church of England of Australia was officially renamed the Anglican Church of Australia. The vicarage was sold into private ownership after the Anglican Parish of Willaura was split in 1990-91, and Willaura joined Ararat, Dunkeld and Glenthompson as part of the Hamilton Parish. [47]

The All Saints centenary was held in February 2011 with approximately 150 people in attendance. [48]

The All Saints Anglican Church continues today to hold church services, christenings and confirmations.
[1] Aboriginal clan boundaries are taken from Ian Clark in *Historic Places Special Investigation South-Western Victoria Descriptive Report*, (Melbourne, Vic.: Land Conservation Council, January 1996), 25. These are generalised descriptions only and bear no relation to current Native Title Claim boundaries. Aboriginal clan names are those used by present-day Traditional Owner groups.


[3] The term 'squatter' first applied to those pastoralists who took illegal possession of land before depasturing licences were introduced in 1836. Its meaning was broadened in later years to refer more generally to those who undertook sheep and cattle grazing under license on large tracts of land.


[10] Ibid., 72-3.


[12] Information from Ararat Rural City Heritage Study Stage 1 Community Meeting, Willaura, 30 May 2012.


[22] Cited in Ibid., 76.


[28] Ibid., 235.


[31] Banfield, *Like the Ark...The Story of Ararat*, 130.


[33] Banfield, *Like the Ark...The Story of Ararat*, 131-2.


[36] Banfield, *Like the Ark...The Story of Ararat*, 130.


[38] Banfield, *Like the Ark...The Story of Ararat*, 136.

[39] Information from Ararat Rural City Heritage Study Stage 1 Community Meeting, Willaura, 30 May 2012.


[44] Much of this information has been taken from Goeman et al., *The History of Willaura and District 1835-1985*, 168-71.


[48] Ibid.

**Description**

**Physical Description**

**Precinct Extent**

The precinct comprises the Anglican Sunday School Hall, All Saints Anglican Church and bell tower and the former vicarage located at 14, 16 and 20 Delacombe Way on the south side of the street.

**Urban Design Features**

The buildings are all located in a row on the south side of Delacombe Way. They have a rural setting with no kerb and channeling and a grass verge in front of the sites. There is a cyclone wire fence across the front of all three properties. The buildings are widely spaced with the exception of the bell tower and church, which are located close to each other. The church and bell tower are located at the centre of the complex and have the smallest set back from the street. The bell tower is dominant in the streetscape as it is close to the front boundary. The church is set back from the bell tower. The hall on the west side is set further back than the church from the street and the former vicarage on the east side is set further back again. There is a large English Oak on the church site between the residence and the church and low shrubbery between the hall and the church. There is generally no vegetation to the front of the buildings, with the exception of two small Pencil Pines and adjacent shrubbery either side of the entry at the front of the residence. There is an unmade driveway on the east side of the church and wide concrete path from the front gate to the western porch at the front of the church.

**Significant Building Features**

All buildings are timber framed with lightweight cladding, either strapped sheet paneling or weatherboard with the exception of the cream brick base to the bell tower. Similar cream brick is used for the chimneys to the hall, helping to tie the buildings together by way of common use of materials. The buildings are painted white and it is likely that they all original had pale colour walls if not white walls. The roofs to buildings are all pitched with corrugated galvanised roof cladding with the exception of the shingle roof cladding to the bell tower. All roofs have some sort of decorative element and level of complexity whether it be the use of a Dutch gable or the conical roof vents on the church or the corbelled
brick chimneys with tapered tops to the residence. The church is the most decorative of the three buildings with its timber and pressed metal decoration to the gable ends at the front of the building and timber frieze decoration at the front between the porches and below the eaves on the side elevations. Original windows to the hall and residence are timber framed and double hung. The church retains its original pointed arch timber framed windows to the side elevations and large stained glass window to the rear elevation. The pointed arch double doors to the front porches are also original and an important feature of the church. The vertical timber paneled doors to the hall are also an important feature similar to the church.

The church and former Vicarage are constructed in the Edwardian style with their timber detailing and decorative gable ends indicating the period in which they were constructed. The timber strapped paneling and cream brick used on the bell tower and Sunday School Hall demonstrate their 1940s and 1950s date of construction, but all of the buildings are unified due to their common use of materials and similar forms and scales.

### Individual Property Descriptions

#### Anglican Sunday School Hall 14 Delacombe Way - Contributory

The Sunday School Hall is a timber framed building with strapped fibre cement sheet cladding to the exterior. The building comprises a main hall section with a Dutch gable roof and a transverse wing to the rear, also with a Dutch gable roof. The roof is clad in galvanised corrugated iron with wide lined eaves. The front hall wing contains central double timber doors facing the street (north elevation) with a double hung timber window either side. The east side elevation contains two evenly spaced double hung windows towards the front and a single door to the rear. The west elevation contains a central cream brick chimney breast and chimney with a timber framed double hung window either side. The rear wing extends beyond the side wall of the front hall by approximately a single door width on both sides. One end wall of the rear wing contains an elevated entry with stairs and the other contains a fireplace and chimney. The chimney stack to this rear chimney has been removed and the chimney breast has been painted.

#### All Saints Anglican Church and bell tower 16 Delacombe Way - Contributory

The church is a timber framed weatherboard clad building with a gable roofed nave and a pair of gable roofed entry porches to the front. Each porch contains central pointed arch double doors in the front elevation with vertical timber paneling. The main gable and gables to the porches run perpendicular to the street and are clad in corrugated galvanised iron. The eaves are wide with exposed rafters and there are three metal conical roof vents to the ridge. The gable ends of the nave and porches facing the street are decorated with projecting gable tops with cut-out timber panels containing a tri-foil leaf motif in front of pressed metal sheeting. The remainder of the gable end of the nave has a grid of half timbering with pressed metal sheet infill and the projecting wall between the two gabled porches is topped with an arched timber frieze over a band of pressed metal. This decorative treatment to the front of the church is highly unusual. The side elevations of the nave contain three evenly spaced pointed arch windows with timber frames. The side elevation to each of the porches contains a smaller scale pointed arch window. Below the eaves to the side walls of the nave is a frieze with simple vertical half timbering. The rear gable end of the nave contains a large timber framed pointed arch window with three pointed arch panels of stained glass with leadlight.

The bell tower is located to the front and east side adjacent to the church. It has a square plan with a cream brick ground floor and wide timber strapped fibre board cladding to the upper walls. The upper floor is set in from the lower brick walls and tapers slightly towards the roof. The roof has a pyramidal form with wide boxed timber eaves and is clad in shingles. There are two scrolled wrought iron brackets under the eaves at each corner. The ground floor has a single entry door to one side and a rectangular timber framed window with three sashes in each of the other sides. Each side of the upper floor has a square pointed arch opening with timber louvres.

The bell tower has an overall English folly-like appearance.
The former Vicarage is a timber framed, weatherboard clad residence with a complex roof form. The roof has a main Dutch gable running perpendicular to the street, a front hipped roof running parallel to the street and gable and hipped roof wings extending from the main roof. The verandah across the front has a skillion roof that continues from the roofline. The roof is clad in corrugated galvanised iron with wide eaves and exposed rafters. Other roof features include half timbering to the gable ends and the small gable in the Dutch gable and a dormer vent on the front of the main hip with cut-out pressed metal decoration. There are two red brick chimneys with brick corbelling and tapered chimney tops.

The front elevation of the residence facing the street is wide and asymmetrical. It comprises a front door with side lights, and a narrow double hung window either side, two paired double hung windows and a single double hung window. An interesting feature indicating its former use as a vicarage is a small verandah entry to the rear of the front wing on the church side of the house, which was obviously a secondary entry for the Vicar and parishioners from the church. The original windows to the residence are timber framed and double hung. Windows to the front appear to be original while a number of the side and rear windows have been replaced with aluminium. The verandah across the front has turned timber posts and a scalloped timber fretwork frieze with vertical slats and a gable at one end.

**Statement of Significance**

**What is significant?**

The Willaura Anglican Church Heritage Precinct comprising the Anglican Sunday School Hall, All Saints Anglican Church and bell tower and the former vicarage located at 14, 16 and 20 Delacombe Way on the south side of the street and the English Oak located between the church and the former vicarage.

**How is it significant?**

The Willaura Anglican Church Heritage Precinct is of historical, aesthetic and social significance to the Rural City of Ararat.

**Why is it significant?**

The Willaura Anglican Church Heritage Precinct is of historical significance for its associations with the development of Willaura as a community and service centre for the booming farming district in the early to mid twentieth century. As part of the Ballarat Diocese, the first record of Church of England worship at Wickliffe Road (later Willaura) was on 1 March 1903. Early records show that services were held in the public hall in Willaura and occasionally in the Edgarley run wool shed. In December 1909, the Church of England Willaura Parochial District (including Wickliffe and Lake Bolac) became the Willaura Parish. The church and vicarage were constructed in 1910 on land donated by Thomas Millear. The construction of a separate Sunday School building in 1940 demonstrates the continuing growth of the population of the town at this time. The bell tower on the site is of historical significance for its associations with the Millear family who donated the land for the church and vicarage. The bell tower was erected in 1955 by the Millear family in memory of their mother, Rosa Elizabeth Millear. The Church is also of historical significance for its association with former Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser. The marriage of Tamara Beggs and Malcolm Fraser, who was Prime Minister of Australia from 1975 until 1983, was celebrated on 9 December 1956 at the church. (Criteria A, B & H)

The Willaura Anglican Church Heritage Precinct is of aesthetic significance as complex that, although constructed at different stages, forms a coherent and picturesque collection of buildings with unifying characteristics. Each building is distinguishable for its period of construction but united in common characteristics. The church and former Vicarage are constructed in the Edwardian style with their timber detailing and decorative gable ends indicating the period in which...
they were constructed. The timber strapped paneling and cream brick used on the bell tower and Sunday School Hall demonstrate their 1940s and 1950s date of construction but all of the buildings are unified due to their common use of materials and similar forms and scales. The church is of particular aesthetic significance as the most decorative of the three buildings with its timber and pressed metal decoration to the gable ends and timber frieze decoration at the front between the porches and below the eaves on the side elevations. The bell tower is also of aesthetic significance as an English folly-like structure adding to the picturesque nature of the precinct. (Criteria D & E)

The Willaura Anglican Church Heritage Precinct is of social significance as a focus for worship and as a community gathering place in the district since 1910. The Church and Sunday School Hall have continued to be important community buildings in the area and still in operation for church services, christenings and confirmations. (Criterion G)

Recommendations 2015

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## History and Historical Context

### Contextual history

Willaura is located on the traditional lands of the Tjapwurong Aboriginal peoples.[1]

Governor of New South Wales, Sir Richard Bourke, instructed Surveyor General Thomas Mitchell to finish tracing the course of the Darling River to the Murray River, to survey the Murray to its junction with the Murrumbidgee River, and then to follow the southern bank of the Murray back to the settled parts of New South Wales. After crossing the Murray River near present-day Boundary Bend, Mitchell ignored his official instructions and explored instead the northern and western areas of the Port Phillip District (later the Colony of Victoria), a region he titled 'Australia Felix'.

Mitchell travelled through what was to become the municipality of Ararat Rural City in July and September 1836. On the return to Sydney, Mitchell's expedition made camp on 19 September 1836 to the west of a hill Mitchell named Mount
Stavely. Mitchell named the Hopkins River on the same day. The expedition set up camp on 20 September, south of today's Willaura, at the eastern end of a line of 50 salt lakes, which Mitchell called Cockajemmy Lakes.[2]

Mitchell's exploratory expedition through the area is marked by the names he gave to the country and by a cairn on the Willaura-Wickliffe Road erected by the Willaura and District Historical Society and unveiled in 1986.

As in other parts of the Port Phillip District, squatters took up large tracts of Crown land (public land) in the area to graze mainly sheep from 1837.[3] The first squatters came from Van Diemen's land via Geelong and Portland Bay, which was occupied by the Henty family in 1834. Soon after overlanders from north of the Murray River arrived. This second wave of squatters was attracted by favorable newspaper reports of Mitchell's 'Australia Felix'. It has been estimated that two-thirds of the pioneer settlers in Western Victoria were from Scotland; nearly all were Lowland farmers.[4]

The two major runs in what was to become known as the Wickliffe Road (Willaura) district were Mount William, 38,000 acres taken up by Thomas Chirnside in 1842; and Greenvale, 56,880 acres taken up by Robert Adams in 1843.[5] These runs contributed to the establishment of a significant wool growing industry in the district.

The Duffy Land Act, passed in June 1862, put aside ten million acres of land in designated 'agricultural areas', which were surveyed into 40-640 acre allotments. Over 1,888,000 acres in the Colony of Victoria were alienated under the 1862 Act,[6] but mostly into the hands of the squatters. Approximately 250,000 acres between Ararat, Stratham and Wickliffe, and 107,500 acres between Fiery Creek and the Hopkins River, were made available in 1862.[7] Allotments were taken up in the district of what was to become Wickliffe Road (Willaura).

The Ararat-Dunkeld section of the Ararat-Portland railway line opened in 1877 with a railway station at Wickliffe Road (Willaura). The Wickliffe Road Railway Station Post Office opened in January 1878.[8] One of the first businesses established in the Wickliffe Road settlement was the Junction Hotel, opened in 1878. The inhabitants of the Wickliffe Road district petitioned for a school in August 1879. However a school was not opened until June 1885, when Wickliffe Road State School No. 2662 started part-time operation with Watgania State School No. 1384.[9]

Salt for stock was extracted by Henry Wileman from the Cockajemmy lakes south of present-day Willaura from 1866 to 1889. By 1883, two salt factories had been established. So large was the working population at the lakes, a school was petitioned for in 1885. The Biggins family took over the industry in 1889 and operated it through until the 1980s.[10]

In 1883, the Wickliffe Road settlement, on the Ararat-Portland railway line, had a population of 30, two salt factories to the south, a hotel, a part-time school, a store, a few cottages, and a railway station. In 1890, Wickliffe Road State School had 55 pupils in attendance.

With the advent of share farming from 1897 on Mount William and Edgarley, rapid progress was made in the district. The Wickliffe Road State School was enlarged to about three times its original size and the Colonial Bank opened a branch in the township.

In 1900 there was a large rush to the Grampians area, south of Mount William, to what became known as the Mafeking rush. Premier of Victoria Thomas Bent issued free railway passes to the unemployed of Melbourne and thousands of men arrived at the Wickliffe Road (Willaura) railway station from where they made their way to the diggings across the wheat crops of sharefarmers on the Mount William run.[11] The rush to Mafeking was short lived, and buildings established in the township were moved to other locations. The Willaura Hobby Boutique in Willaura, for instance, was moved from Mafeking, and the hotel at Mafeking was moved to a farm near Willaura and used as a private residence.[12] In 1901, the population of Willaura consisted of four families belonging to two railway gatekeepers, the stationmaster and the schoolmaster.[13]

By the 1890s, children of selectors in the Colony of Victoria wanting to take up farming were left with only the Mallee...
country. As a consequence, pressure was applied to the government to make existing large land-holdings available as small farms. Planning for the 1904 Closer Settlement Act provided further impetus for the owners of large pastoral properties in the municipality to introduce their own closer settlement schemes. The owners of the Mount William run made 100 to 300-acre blocks for cultivation available to share and tenant farmers in 1897, with a further 18,000 acres released in 1902. The owners of Greenvale offered tenant farmers three-year leases.[14] In addition, Thomas Milliar advertised land for sharefarming on Edgarley (a subdivision of Greenvale) in 1899, and by 1910 there were 23 tenant farmers on the property.[15]

Arthur Murphy, an Ararat businessman, operated as an agent for the owners of pastoral properties. Murphy subdivided a number of properties in the Lake Bolac and Wickliffe Road districts in the early 1900s for the owners, and recruited settlers from the northern districts of the Colony of Victoria with experience in wheat farming to take up the land.[16] In 1902, Murphy sold 16,000 acres of Greenvale and subdivided it into allotments of about 320 acres. Some of the land adjoined the Wickliffe Road Railway Station. In June of the same year, Murphy sold another 9,000 acres of Greenvale for Charles Ayrey, who had purchased the land with a view to subdivision. This land included a township site, which was later named Willaura, close to the Wickliffe Road Railway Station.[17] As part of this development, land situated opposite the Wickliffe Road railway station was subdivided into township blocks. Buyers from Melbourne, Bendigo and the Wimmera paid up to £45 for one quarter of an acre facing the railway reserve.[18] Before the end of the month, builders were erecting shops and houses. Ayrey wanted to name the town after himself, but this never eventuated.[19]

By 1903, 75,000 acres of former grazing land in the Lake Bolac-Willaura district had been brought under cultivation[20] locating Wickliffe Road township at the centre of a substantial wheat-growing district.

Wickliffe Road township was renamed Willaura on 1 August 1905 and a police station was established in the township in 1906.

The newspaper, the Willaura Farmer, commenced operation on 1 June 1906, and described Willaura at that time: 'It includes the Junction Hotel, Incledon's coffee palace, dining rooms, three blacksmith's establishments, two fruiterers [and] three general stores'.[21]

The sale of Mount William estate in October 1906 resulted in further subdivision with farms sold at between Â£6-Â£7 an acre. Thomas Wileman also subdivided his land to the north of Warranooke Street, Willaura, into quarter acre blocks and sold the blocks from 1906. Land sales and leasing of land to farmers in the district transformed Wickliffe Road into a busy township.

Willaura was described by the Willaura Farmer on 1 June 1907:

Business houses which have been erected during the past twelve months include a general store, a baker's shop, a butcher's shop, a bootmaker's shop, two fruit palaces, two millinery and dressmaking establishments, two machinery depots, and a fertiliser shed. This, it must be admitted, is a wonderful record for a township which in 1900 was comprised of five families. During the past year Willaura has gained a new post office. The Railway Department has not been slow to recognise Willaura's progress. A new shunting line and siding for wheat stacking has been established to cope with the increased grain traffic. The department has given further evidence of its firm belief in the stability of the district by erecting a new and commodious dwelling for the stationmaster, and will shortly convert the old residence into an up-to-date railway station. A police station is now in course of erection, and the time is not far distant when the police court will be held locally. Saleyards were established locally during the year, and stock sales are now conducted regularly in the town. The drainage of the town has been sadly neglected, and a windmill has been erected presumably to annoy the townspeople. The drainage question is still demanding the attention of the Shire Council, which is being spurred into action by the Public Health Department at the instance of the Progress Association.[22]

A horseracing club was formed in 1907. As the township was located near a large swamp, drainage in the town posed an
ongoing problem.

Gold mining was taken up on a small scale in the Willaura district at Half Way Gully in July 1906. Miners cut through a sandstone bar on the Hopkins River to divert water for the washing and sluicing of gold.[23] The Kiora Gold Mining Company was formed in 1907, and in 1914, after Willaura district residents petitioned the Minister for Mines, the Director of the Geological Survey visited the area to report on the advisability of testing for gold leads. It seems little prospecting activity took place after his visit.[24]

In 1909, eighty more allotments were made available by the sale of ten acres of Thomas Wileman's land on the north side of the township. The sale realised Â£864 10/–, or an average of Â£54 per acre.[25]

Willaura became an important receival centre for grain, and in 1910 was the second biggest in the western half of Victoria.[26] Field trials of H V McKay farm equipment were held in the Willaura and Westmere districts from 1907 until 1953, including, in 1907, trials of the Sunshine Push Harvester, so called because the machine was pushed by eight horses attached to the rear.[27]

Farming land at Willaura donated by the Millear family was converted to a recreation reserve in 1910 when a committee placed a notice in the Willaura Farmer calling for designs for a reserve including tennis courts, cricket, football and sports ground with grandstand and tree plantings.[28] By 1911, the township included two banks, police station, courthouse and a weekly newspaper.[29] Willaura Township was proclaimed in 1912.[30] A golf course opened in 1913.

After fires in 1912 and 1916 burnt down buildings in Willaura, residents formed a fire brigade to protect the township.

Approximately 90 returned soldiers from World War One took up portions of five estates in the municipality. The largest settlement was on the Narrapumelap and Cowaugh estate, where 14,000 acres were divided into 37 farms, including land in the Willaura district on Back Bolac Road. However, because of the small size of allotments allocated, less than 50 per cent of the original soldier settlers made a success of their farms.[31]

Farmers and graziers in the area were well placed to take advantage of the economic boom conditions of post World War One. By the 1920s, crop rotation techniques, the use of superphosphate and the introduction of improved wheat varieties facilitated a marked increase in wheat yields in the district.[32] In addition, wheat was cultivated on an extensive scale with tractors and the motorised header-harvester - a machine that was able to reap a crop before it was fully ripe, harvest a knocked down crop, and separate straw and grain. Wool also reached high prices in the 1920s. Wool from Yalla-y-Poora, for instance, made a world record of 51s. ½ d. in 1924, which stood as an Australasian record for twenty years.[33]

The Willaura Farmer newspaper closed in 1921. Premises to house the Willaura fire station were constructed next to the post office in 1922. The Willaura Bush Fire Brigade was formed in 1933. Electric light was connected to the township in 1938. On January 14 1944, a fire from the Grampians travelled towards Glenthompson and Lake Bolac. Three homesteads and 8,000 sheep were lost in the Willaura police district in the blaze.[34]

For the most part closer settlement as an active government policy was wound down from 1938, however another phase of soldier settlement commenced after World War Two. In the municipality, because of larger blocks and more intensive support and training, this scheme was more successful than that which followed World War One. Soldier settlement was facilitated with the assistance of Returned Sailors' Soldiers' and Airmens Imperial Leagues (RSSAILAs). The Willaura RSSAILA Sub-Branch submitted a list of properties totalling 25,600 acres that it deemed suitable for settlement, including land on Edgarley, Narrapumelap, Yarram Park and Toora. It was also noted that homesteads at Berrambool, Narrapumelap and Burumbeep stood vacant.[35] Subsequently, 120 former servicemen settled on 80,000 acres excised from eight large properties in the Willaura-Streatham-Wickliffe area: Burumbeep, Narrapumelap, Berrambool, Yalla-y-
Poora, Blythvale, Edgarley, Nerrin Nerrin and Bushy Creek, where they mostly took up grazing and mixed farming.[36] In addition, a portion of the Edgarley, 5,101 acres near the Willaura township, was subdivided in 1946 into eight allotments. The land was described as suitable for sheep grazing, mixed farming and cereal growing by the Soldier Settlement Commission.[37] A Soldier Settlement office was established in Willaura to facilitate the settlement. Berrambool, Narrapumelap and Burumbeep homesteads provided temporary housing for settler families whilst other housing was constructed. Today, plaques mark soldier settlement estates at Berrambool, Edgarley, Burumbeep, Trawalla South and Nerrin Nerrin.

The phase of soldier settlement corresponded with good seasons, the post World War Two economic boom, and, from 1940, 'ley' farming (where crop planting is alternated with a forage legume for grazing, such as clover), which greatly increased wool production and wheat yields per acre.[38] This era brought significant wealth and growth to Willaura. The Moyston-Willaura Road became known locally as 'Toorak Road' because of the substantial homes and farms established there during this period.[39] With the economic boom and growth in district population following World War Two, a number of projects were undertaken in Willaura: a reticulated water supply was established in 1949; the Country Fire Authority built a new fire station in 1956; the Willaura Memorial Hall opened in 1957, and new classrooms, staffroom and office were constructed at Willaura State School in the same year, with another classroom added in 1964.[40] An Infant Welfare Centre opened in 1959. A scout hall was built in the early 1960s.

Tamara Beggs and Malcolm Fraser, later Prime Minister of Australia, were married at the All Saints Anglican Church in Willaura in 1956.

The Victorian Grain Elevators Board, established in 1935, introduced bulk-handling facilities for wheat; in the 1939-40 season the Board commenced operations as the sole bulk handler of wheat. Concrete silos and weighbridges were erected at railway stations, followed by steel silos constructed by the Grain Elevators Board to handle the bumper crops of the 1950s and 1960s. In the 1962-63 season, wheat deliveries at silos at Tatyoon measured 271,711 bushels; at Westmere 408,584 bushels; and at Willaura 350,218 bushels. Steel silos were built at Willaura in 1963. Bulk handling of oats commenced in 1962 and a number of oats storage sheds were built in the study area, including a shed at the Willaura railway station complex in 1964.[41]

The Checchi Reservoir opened in 1962 to improve water supplies to Willaura and other townships. A swimming pool opened in 1965. Willaura was connected to sewerage in 1966. Housing Commission Elderly Citizen flats were erected in 1973.[42]

Major extensions to the hospital were undertaken in 1976 and the nursing hostel was built in 1994.

Fires occurred in the Grampians in 2006, when 26 homes, 129,000 hectares of land, thousands of stock and fences were burnt. Begun by a lightning strike on 19 January 2006, on 22 January the fire spread rapidly in a southerly direction towards Dunkeld, reaching the outskirts of Willaura before a strong wind took the fire back in a northward direction, affecting a number of small communities along the eastern side of the Grampians. A man and his son died between Moyston and Pomonal when they were caught in the fire. A memorial has been erected near the place they died. In Willaura, the cenotaph was refurbished in memory of the 2006 fire.

In recent years, Grain Corp has established grain bunker facilities at Willaura.

Aggregation of farms into larger holdings from the 1960s has resulted in an ongoing reduction of population in the district. With the removal from Willaura of major employers such as the PMG, the railways, and the Ararat Shire depot in the 1980s, this trend has continued. Today cropping and wool growing are still the district's mainstays, and while many of the town's shops and former businesses have closed, there remains a strong community and a range of essential services.[43]
Precinct history

The Willaura Main Street Residential Heritage Precinct is located on Allotment 23 (125 acres), Parish of Willaura. Allotment 23 was originally part of Thomas Millear's Edgarley run (a subdivision of the Greenvale run), and first held freehold in 1869 by J. Austin, T. Maidment and T. Millear.[1] Harry Wileman the younger, carter of Wickliffe Road, purchased 59 acres of Allotment 23 in 1882. Thomas Wileman, hotel keeper of Wickliffe Road, and brother of Harry Wileman, took over ownership of the 59 acres in 1886.[2] The Wileman family were involved in salt collecting from the Cockajemmy lakes south of present-day Willaura from 1866 to 1889. By 1883, two salt factories had been established. So large was the working population at the lakes, a school was petitioned for in 1885.[3]

As part of the township survey made for Charles Ayrey, a government road (Warranooke Street) was surveyed on the southern boundary of the land in 1902. Thomas Wileman subdivided most of the land into quarter acre lots over the period 1906-12, and sold the lots in various land sales over the period 1906-1920.

The Willaura Main Street Residential Heritage Precinct comprises Lots 14, 16, 17, 19, 78 and 79 of the aforementioned subdivision. Lots 14, 16, 17, 19 were surveyed in March 1906, and Lots 78 and 79 were surveyed in October 1909.[4]

96 Main Street

Lot 14, 96 Main Street, was held freehold by Maria Dean Wileman (nee Godwin and Thomas Wileman's wife) in April 1911. The property was sold in September 1919 to Arthur Hopkins, storekeeper, Willaura. The Hopkins brothers conducted a grocery store in the town. Wilfred Cooper, commission agent of Willaura, took over ownership in September 1926, and William Cooper, farmer of Willaura, became the owner in November 1941. The Cooper family retained ownership of the property until 1980.[5]

Because of its architectural style, it is likely that the existing residence at 96 Main Street was constructed soon after the property was transferred to the ownership of Maria Wileman in 1911, and was most likely the home of Maria and Thomas Wileman. It is believed that the residence was architect designed.[6]

100 Main Street

Lot 16, 100 Main Street, was sold to Robert Cotton Metherall in May 1910.[7] Metherall operated an agency in Willaura for John Darling and Sons from ca 1909. He married Jessie Martin from Tatyoon in May 1910, and the couple left for Geelong in early 1918, where Robert Metherall took up employment as a government wheat inspector.[8] Because of its architectural style, it is believed that the current residence at 100 Main Street was built for the Metheralls, soon after John and Jessie married in 1910.

Frank Womersley, journalist of Willaura, took over ownership of the property in April 1912, the same month he married Kitty Kilfedda, the Willaura postmistress. Womersley was editor and proprietor of the newspaper, the Willaura Farmer, which he published from 1906 until 1916. He was also a Justice of the Peace and served at the Police Court in Willaura. After sitting and passing his Municipal Clerk's examination, Womersley was appointed secretary, valuer, and rate collector to the Shire of Upper Yarra in 1917, and later served as Shire of Swan Hill secretary and town clerk for 37 years. Womersley died in Ararat in 1967.[9]

Walter Heard, farmer of Willaura, became the owner of the property in March 1920. Later owners included: from 1933, Ernest Heard, farmer of Willaura; and from 1945, Gordon Jewell, labourer from Willaura.[10]

102 Main Street
Lot 17, 102 Main Street, was sold to Sydney Wentworth Patterson, medical practitioner, in November 1908.[11]

The Willaura Progress Association was active in requesting medical services for the town. In August 1908, Dr Patterson wrote to the association to inform it that he had purchased Dr Featherstonehough's practice at Glenthompson and intended providing medical services to Willaura.[12] After graduating in medicine from the University of Melbourne in 1904, Patterson gained his M.D. in 1907.[13]

By July 1909, Dr Patterson was residing in Willaura, presumably in the house he had built at 102 Main Street, which is believed to have been architect designed.[14] He practised at Willaura, Glenthompson, Wickliffe, Lake Bolac and Rossbridge. Dr Patterson also opened the Kelvin Private Hospital, built at 7 Commercial Street, Willaura, in March 1910. Dr Patterson leased his residence to Dr William Osler, who had graduated from Scotland's Edinburgh University, from June 1912. Dr Osler took over Patterson's medical duties, including the management of the Kelvin Private Hospital, from January 1913.[15]

Dr Patterson moved to England, and during World War One gave advice on pathology issues to allied forces in France before gaining a D.Sc in London in 1917. In 1919, Patterson was appointed director of the Walter and Eliza Hall Institute for Research in Pathology and Medicine in Melbourne. He was the first person to hold the position because the chosen foundation director died during World War One. Patterson was widely regarded as an excellent teacher of bacteriology, his special field, and he did much to establish the institute's reputation in research. In 1923 he resigned the directorship for a post in North Wales.[16]

The property at 102 Main Street was sold to Charles Wynne, farmer of Willaura, in 1927; to Leo Simpson, draper of Ararat, in 1940; to Thomas and Agnes Albert in 1941; to Frances Hopkins, widow of Willaura, in 1950; to Ian Cameron, grazier of Willaura in January 1957; and to Cyril Checchi, medical practitioner of Willaura, in February 1959 (see 108 Main Street for a background history on Dr Checchi). The property was taken over by Dr Handscombe and his wife in 1983.[17]

106 Main Street

Lots 18 and 19, in Main Street, were sold to Annie Holt, married woman of Willaura, in May 1909.[18] Annie was married to commission agent, John Holt, who owned four vacant allotments in the same subdivision. Annie Holt died at 'Burnlea' (presumably the name of the residence at 106 Main Street) in Willaura on 29 April 1923. Her probate inventory included real estate in Willaura purchased with money given to Annie by her husband, and was described as 'Lots 18 and 19... upon which is erected a weatherboard dwelling', valued at £490.[19] John Holt died on 29 November 1923 at 'Burnlea' in Willaura. The existing residence at 106 Main Street was therefore constructed in the period 1909-23 and was the home of the Holt family.

By March 1923, the property was in the ownership of Gertrude Womersley, married woman of Willaura, and sold to Dr Cyril Checchi in November 1946 (see 108 Main Street for a background history on Dr Checchi).

In 1960, the property was subdivided into two lots: Lot 18 was sold as vacant land, and Lot 19, with the existing residence at 106 Main Street, was sold to Stanislaus and Mary Gleeson, farmer and married woman respectively of Willaura.[20]

108 Main Street

Lot 78, 108 Main Street, was sold to Ellen Walter, housewife of Willaura, in October 1909. Ellen (Nellie) Walter (nee Taggart) married James Dingwall Walter in 1903 in Warrnambool. James Walter operated as a timber merchant in Willaura. The Walters left Willaura for Tumberumba in New South Wales in 1914. Because of its architectural style, the
residence at 108 Main Street was most likely built when the property was in the ownership of the Walters, before it was sold to William George Kent, butcher of Willaura, in April 1917. By 1935, Kent was operating a hotel in Jeparit.[21] It is believed that the residence at 108 Main Street was architect designed.[22]

Cyril Checchi, medical practitioner of Willaura, took over ownership of the property in December 1946 and lived and conducted his surgery there (in an extension built facing Wileman Street at the rear of the house) until he retired from medical practice in 1987 aged 95. He died in 1997.[23]

After purchasing the Willaura medical practice of Doctor Osler, Dr Checci arrived in the township in 1920. He provided medical services to the community, took on management of the Kelvin Private Hospital, which opened in 1910, and provided services to the Willaura Bush Nursing Hospital after it opened in 1935. From 1938, Dr Checchi led a movement to get a water supply for the township, which at that time relied on dams and rainwater tanks. Ten years later, as part of the SRWSC's post-war construction expansion, and under the management of the Ararat Shire Waterworks Trust established in 1946, water was supplied in 1949 from Mount William Creek in the Grampians via a pipeline to Willaura. A six million gallon service basin, named the Checchi Reservoir, was constructed in Willaura in 1962 to improve supplies to Willaura. Dr Checchi was awarded a MBE in 1970 and a CBE in 1976 for services to the Willaura community. In 1980, the Willaura community celebrated 60 years of medical care provided by Dr Checchi.[24]

110 Main Street

Lot 79, 110 Main Street, was sold to John Walter Patterson, plumber of Willaura, in October 1909.[25] John Patterson operated a plumbing and tank making business at 63 Main Street, Willaura, from 1910.[26] After John Patterson's death in 1949, the property at 110 Main Street passed to his widow, Annie Patterson. Raymond Lardner, newsagent of Willaura, took over ownership in 1953. On his death in 1993, the property was taken over by his son.[27] The Lardner family conducted a newsagency and department store at 64 Main Street, Willaura, from 1936 until 2008.[28]

It is likely that the residence at 110 Main Street was built for the Patterson family soon after they purchased the land in 1909.

Contextual history footnotes

[1] Aboriginal clan boundaries are taken from Ian Clark in Historic Places Special Investigation South-Western Victoria Descriptive Report, (Melbourne, Vic.: Land Conservation Council, January 1996), 25. These are generalised descriptions only and bear no relation to current Native Title Claim boundaries. Aboriginal clan names are those used by present-day Traditional Owner groups.


[3] The term 'squatter' first applied to those pastoralists who took illegal possession of land before depasturing licences were introduced in 1836. Its meaning was broadened in later years to refer more generally to those who undertook sheep and cattle grazing under license on large tracts of land.


[10] Ibid., 72-3.


[12] Information from Ararat Rural City Heritage Study Stage 1 Community Meeting, Willaura, 30 May 2012.


[22] Cited in Ibid., 76.


[28] Ibid., 235.


[31] Banfield, *Like the Ark...The Story of Ararat*, 130.


[33] Banfield, *Like the Ark...The Story of Ararat*, 131-2.


[36] Banfield, *Like the Ark...The Story of Ararat*, 130.


[38] Banfield, *Like the Ark...The Story of Ararat*, 136.

[39] Information from Ararat Rural City Heritage Study Stage 1 Community Meeting, Willaura, 30 May 2012.


**Precinct history footnotes**


[2] "Certificate of Title".


[4] "Certificate of Title".
[5] Ibid.
[7] "Certificate of Title".
[10] "Willaura."
[16] Westmore, Patterson, Sydney Wentworth.
[17] "Certificate of Title".
[18] Ibid.
[20] "Certificate of Title".
[21] Ibid.
[22] Robinson and Walter, Personal Communication.
[23] "Certificate of Title".
[25] "Certificate of Title".
[27] "Certificate of Title".
[28] Tomkins, "Fifty Five Years as Willaura's Newsagent."
Description

Physical Description

Precinct Extent

The Willaura Main Street Residential Heritage Precinct extends along the west side of Main Street between Commercial Street and 110 Main Street. It consists of houses with the contributory properties located at 96, 100, 102, 106, 108 and 110 Main Street.

Urban Design Features

The precinct consists of a row of single storey early twentieth century weatherboard houses. The houses are on consistently sized allotments with consistent set backs from the street boundary. The front setbacks predominantly contain lawn with some planting or garden beds to the front of the house. Houses are generally placed centrally on the allotment with setbacks on both sides. The non-corner properties have a crossover and driveway contained in one of the side setbacks. The two corner properties have their driveways to the rear, which are accessed from Wileman Street. The street has concrete kerbing and footpaths with wide, grassed nature strips. All contributory properties have a front fence and they are generally low with no consistently identifiable type. The low height of the fences allows views to be gained to the front of the properties from the road and pedestrian paths. Common features visible in views across the precinct streetscape include dominant pitched roof forms clad in corrugated metal sheet, tall brick chimneys, projecting gable wings and front verandahs.

Significant Building Features

The houses are all detached and double fronted. The roof forms are pitched and hipped or a combination of gable and hipped. The houses at 96, 100, 102 and 110 Main Street are planned on the diagonal axis with two projecting gable wings and a return verandah in between. Tall brick chimneys are generally features of the roofscape. All contributory houses have verandahs to the front with hipped convex roof forms. The roofs are clad in corrugated metal sheet. The contributory houses are all weatherboard with the house at 108 Main Street having a block-fronted timber panel facade. Windows are generally timber framed and double hung and doors are timber with sidelight and highlight windows to the front door. The overall scale of the houses is substantially consistent as is the level of decoration. The exception to this is the house at 108 Main Street, which has a high level of ornate timber detailing and a taller pitched roof than the other contributory house.

The contributory properties have been selected as they are substantially intact and demonstrate key features of the early twentieth century period of housing. The key features include the diagonal axis floor plans, dominant roof forms in a combination of hips and gables, gable end decoration, front and return verandahs with timber posts and fretwork friezes, timber framed openings, twin or tripartite windows, skillion hoods over windows and asymmetrical compositions.

Individual Property Descriptions

Residence 96 Main Street - Contributory

Federation style weatherboard residence set back from the street. It has an all encompassing hipped roof with gable wings on the diagonal axis. The hip ridge has finials at either end and the gable roofs of the diagonal wings also have finials and terracotta ridging. The roof is clad in corrugated metal sheet. A return verandah encompassed under the main roof sits between the two gable wings. The gable wings have bay windows with gable roofs and half timbering to the gable end. Timber posts to the verandah are square and there is a simple curved solid verandah frieze. The front door has highlight and side light windows. The windows are timber framed with double or tripartite sashes. The chimneys have stucco
cornices with terracotta chimney pots. The fence to the front is not original but sympathetic to the streetscape.

**Residence 98 Main Street - Non-Contributory**

Brown brick residence with a tile roof.

**Residence 100 Main Street - Contributory**

Edwardian style weatherboard residence set back from the street. The central section of the building has a hipped roof with gable roofed wings on the diagonal axis and a return verandah in between. The roof of the verandah is a hipped convex form. The roofs are clad in corrugated galvanised iron and the original chimneys are face brick with corbelling at the top. Original windows are timber framed and tripartite with a large central sash and narrow sidelights. The front door has side lights and highlight windows. The gable ends of the projecting wings have decorative fretwork bargeboards and there are skillion hoods over the windows. The verandah has a cast iron lacework frieze. The side end of the verandah has been partially filled in to form a room. The timber picket fence to the front does not appear to be original but is in keeping with the style and age of the residence.

**Residence 102 Main Street - Contributory**

Edwardian style weatherboard residence set back from the street. The main section of the building has a hipped roof with a projecting gable wing to the front. The front form of the building has a tapered corner with a window bridging the taper, which is an unusual feature. The return verandah also follows the line of the taper. The roof of the verandah is a hipped convex form. There are two chimneys with double flues and corbelled cornicing to the top. The verandah has curved timber brackets to corners and a simple geometric patterned timber frieze. There is an arched opening to the verandah in front of the front door. The large bargeboard with the curved ends is a feature of the gable end to the front. Windows are in pairs or tripartite with double hung sashes. The window to the front projecting gable appears to be a later change. The front fence is not original but it is sympathetic to the street.

**Empty block 104 Main Street - Non-Contributory**

**Residence 106 Main Street - Contributory**

A Victorian style weatherboard residence with a large set back from Main Street. The building is symmetrical with a front rectangular section with an M shaped hipped roof hipped wing and a wider hipped wing to the rear. The rear wing projects out symmetrically on either side providing a stop to the front verandah, which extends across the front and to both sides of the building. There is a door on either side at the ends of the verandah. The roof to the verandah has a convex hipped form and the original posts have been replaced with a corner steel rod with diagonal rods either side. The roofs are clad with corrugated metal sheet. The front elevation has a central door with a large timber framed window either side. The openings for these windows appear to be original but the window sashes appear to be a later change. The corrugated iron fence to the front is not original.

**Residence 108 Main Street - Contributory**

An impressive Queen Anne style weatherboard residence set back from the street. The central section of the building has a tall hipped roof with gable roofed wings on the diagonal axis and a return verandah in between. The verandah roof is a hipped convex form. The roofs are clad in painted corrugated iron and there are two tall face brick chimneys with corbelling at the top. The gable end detail to the projecting corner wings is unusual and decorative with a projecting gable panel connecting in with the square bay window. There are decorative corner brackets to the projecting gable panel as
well as to the eaves of the gable end. The same corner brackets are used to the top of the verandah posts. The return verandah, which terminates at the projecting gable wings has a timber fretwork frieze with a curved valence like pattern. Above the double sash bay windows is a triangular pediment motif, which is in a small form to the sides of the bay. There is block front paneling to the front and corner elevations and the lower hip roofed wing to the rear has weatherboard cladding and none of the detailing seen on the front. The window frames have decorative carved detailing and there are decorative timber brackets under the eaves. The front door has sidelight and highlight windows. Windows are timber framed in pairs or tripartite with double hung sashes.

*Residence 110 Main Street - Contributory*

A symmetrical Edwardian style weatherboard residence with a simple rectangular main wing to the front and a hipped roof. The building is set back from the street. There is a convex hipped verandah across the front with turned timber posts and a simple timber fretwork frieze with uprights. The frieze is missing between the two centre posts but this may be an original feature. The roofs are clad in corrugated metal sheet. The front elevation contains a central door with sidelights and highlights and a tripartite double hung window either side. The double hung windows to the side elevations have skillion hoods over with timber side brackets. These appear to be an original feature. The timber post and rail fence to the front is not original but is sympathetic to the residence and streetscape.

**Statement of Significance**

**What is significant?**

The Willaura Main Street Residential Heritage Precinct, which extends along the west side of Main Street between Commercial Street and 110 Main Street. It consists of houses with the contributory properties located at 96, 100, 102, 106, 108 and 110 Main Street.

**How is it significant?**

The Willaura Main Street Residential Heritage Precinct is of historical and aesthetic significance to Ararat Rural City.

**Why is it significant?**

The Willaura Main Street Residential Precinct, which consists of a row of early twentieth century houses is historically significant for its ability to illustrate the boom period of settlement in Willaura. The Wickcliffe Road settlement, as it was formerly known, had 30 residents in 1883, but after grazier Charles Ayrey sold his land, which was originally part of Greenvale estate in June 1902, the population expanded with some of the land, situated opposite the Wickliffe Road railway station, subdivided into township blocks. This, along with the advent of share farming from 1897 on Mount William and Edgarley, the 1904 *Closer Settlement Act* and the sale of the Mount William estate in October 1906 transformed Wickliffe Road into a busy township; by 1910 it was the second biggest receival centre for grain in the western half of Victoria. The houses are constructed on blocks that were subdivided by Thomas Wileman (who purchased the land in 1886) into quarter acre lots over the period 1906-12, and sold them in various land sales over the period 1906-1920. All of the contributory houses in the precinct were constructed in this period. The scale and decoration to some of the houses demonstrates the prosperity of the residents at the time with some of the houses most likely being architecturally designed (houses at 96, 102 and 108 Main Street). The house at 102 Main Street has important historical associations with Dr. Sydney Wentworth Patterson who, in 1919, was appointed the first director of the Walter & Eliza Hall Institute for Research in Pathology. Most of the residences have at some stage been the home of prominent Willaura residents, important in the town's history such as Marie and Thomas Wileman at 96 Main Street, Frank Womersley editor and proprietor of the *Willaura Farmer* at 100 Main Street and timber merchant James Walter and later Dr. Cyril Checchi at 108 Main Street. (Criteria A, B & H)
The Willaura Main Street Residential Heritage Precinct is of aesthetic significance as an impressive row of early twentieth century houses that share common elements of scale, siting, materials and roof forms. The precinct is aesthetically significant for containing substantially intact and good examples of houses from the early twentieth century that retain key original features of the Edwardian style including overall composition, roof forms, opening types and timber decoration. The residence at 108 Main Street has particular aesthetic significance for its elaborate timber decoration and complex roof form demonstrating the Queen Anne style a sub-style of the Edwardian period of architecture. (Criteria D & E)

Recommendations 2015

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Volume 3 Section 3 Citations for heritage precincts recommended for the Ararat Planning Scheme March 2016

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**History and Historical Context**

**Contextual History**

Willaura is situated on the traditional lands of the Tjapwurong Aboriginal peoples.[1]

Governor of New South Wales, Sir Richard Bourke, instructed Surveyor General Thomas Mitchell to finish tracing the course of the Darling River to the Murray River, to survey the Murray to its junction with the Murrumbidgee River, and then to follow the southern bank of the Murray back to the settled parts of New South Wales. After crossing the Murray River near present-day Boundary Bend, Mitchell ignored his official instructions and explored instead the northern and western areas of the Port Phillip District (later the Colony of Victoria), a region he titled 'Australia Felix'.

Mitchell travelled through what was to become the municipality of Ararat Rural City in July and September 1836. On the return to Sydney, Mitchell's expedition made camp on 19 September 1836 to the west of a hill Mitchell named Mount Stavely. Mitchell named the Hopkins River on the same day. The expedition set up camp on 20 September, south of today's Willaura, at the eastern end of a line of 50 salt lakes, which Mitchell called Cockajemmy Lakes.[2]

Mitchell's exploratory expedition through the area is marked by the names he gave to the country and by a cairn on the Willaura-Wickliffe Road erected by the Willaura and District Historical Society and unveiled in 1986.
As in other parts of the Port Phillip District, squatters took up large tracts of Crown land (public land) in the area to graze mainly sheep from 1837.[3] The first squatters came from Van Diemen's land via Geelong and Portland Bay, occupied by the Henty family in 1834. Soon after overlanders from north of the Murray River arrived. This second wave of squatters was attracted by favorable newspaper reports of Mitchell's 'Australia Felix'. It has been estimated that two-thirds of the pioneer settlers in the Western Victoria were from Scotland; nearly all were Lowland farmers.[4]

The two major runs in what was to become known as the Wickliffe Road (Willaura) district were Mount William, 38,000 acres taken up by Thomas Chirnside in 1842; and Greenvale, 56,880 acres taken up by Robert Adams in 1843.[5] These runs contributed to the establishment of a significant wool growing industry in the district.

The Duffy Land Act, passed in June 1862, put aside ten million acres of land in designated 'agricultural areas', which were surveyed into 40-640 acre allotments. Over 1,888,000 acres in the Colony of Victoria were alienated under the 1862 Act,[6] but mostly into the hands of the squatters. Approximately 250,000 acres between Ararat, Streatham and Wickliffe, and 107,500 acres between Fiery Creek and the Hopkins River, were made available in 1862.[7] Allotments were taken up in the district of what was to become Wickliffe Road (Willaura).

Salt for stock was extracted by Henry Wileman from the Cockajemmy lakes south of present-day Willaura from 1866 to 1889. By 1883, two salt factories had been established. So large was the working population at the lakes, a school was petitioned for in 1885. The Biggins family took over the industry in 1889 and operated it through until the 1980s.[10]

By the 1890s, children of selectors in the Colony of Victoria wanting to take up farming were left with only the Mallee country. As a consequence, pressure was applied to the government to make existing large land-holdings available as small farms. Planning for the 1904 Closer Settlement Act provided further impetus for the owners of large pastoral properties in the municipality to introduce their own closer settlement schemes through leasing. The owners of the Mount William run made 100 to 300-acre blocks for cultivation available to share and tenant farmers in 1897, with a further 18,000 acres released in 1902, and the owners of Greenvale offered tenant farmers three-year leases.[13] In addition, Thomas Millear at Edgarley advertised land for sharefarming on Edgarley in 1899, and by 1910 there were 23 tenant farmers on the property.[14]

Arthur Murphy, an Ararat businessman, operated as an agent for the owners of pastoral properties. Murphy subdivided a number of properties in the Lake Bolac and Wickliffe Road districts in the early 1900s for the owners, and recruited settlers from the northern districts with experience in wheat farming to take up the land.[15] In 1902, Murphy sold 16,000 acres of Greenvale and subdivided it into allotments of about 320 acres. Some of the land adjoined the Wickliffe Road Railway Station. In June of the same year, Murphy sold another 9,000 acres of Greenvale for Charles Ayrey, who had purchased the land with a view to subdivision. This land included a township site, which was later named Willaura, close to the Wickliffe Road Railway Station.[16]
This subdivision attracted wheat farmers to the Wickliffe Road area. By 1903, 75,000 acres of former grazing land in the Lake Bolac-Willaura district had been brought under cultivation[17] locating Wickliffe Road township at the centre of a substantial wheat-growing district.

Wickliffe Road township was renamed Willaura on 1 August 1905 and a police station was established in the township in 1906. The newspaper, the Willaura Farmer, commenced operation on 1 June 1906, and described Willaura at that time: 'It includes the Junction Hotel, Incledon's coffee palace, dining rooms, three blacksmith's establishments, two fruiterers, [and] three general stores'.[18]

A horseracing club was formed in 1907. As the township was located near a large swamp, drainage in the town posed an ongoing problem.

Gold mining was taken up on a small scale in the Willaura district. At Half Way Gully, Willaura, in July 1906, miners cut through a sandstone bar on the Hopkins River to divert the water flow for the washing and sluicing of gold.[19] The Kiora Gold Mining Company was formed in 1907, and in 1914, after Willaura district residents petitioned the Minister for Mines, the Director of the Geological Survey visited the area to report on the advisability of testing for gold leads. It seems little prospecting activity took place after his visit.[20]

Willaura became an important receival centre for grain, and in 1910 was the second biggest in the western half of Victoria.[21] Field trials of H V McKay farm equipment were held in the Willaura and Westmere districts from 1907 until 1953, including, in 1907, trials of the Sunshine Push Harvester, so called because the machine was pushed by eight horses attached to the rear.[22]

Farming land at Willaura was converted to a recreation reserve in 1910 when a committee placed a notice in the Willaura Farmer calling for designs for a reserve including tennis courts, cricket, football and sports ground with grandstand and tree plantings.[23] By 1911, the township included two banks, police station, courthouse and a weekly newspaper.[24] Willaura Township was proclaimed in 1912.[25] A golf course opened in 1913.

After fires in 1912 and 1916 burnt down buildings in Willaura, residents formed a fire brigade to protect the township.

Approximately 90 returned soldiers from World War One took up portions of five estates in the municipality. The largest settlement was on the Narrapumelap and Cowaugh estate, where 14,000 acres were divided into 37 farms, including land in the Willaura district on Back Bolac Road. However, because of the small size of allotments allocated, less than 50 per cent of the original soldier settlers made a success of their farms.[26]

Farmers and graziers in the area were well placed to take advantage of the economic boom conditions of post World War One. By the 1920s, crop rotation techniques, the use of superphosphate and the introduction of improved wheat varieties facilitated a marked increase in wheat yields in the district.[27] In addition, wheat was cultivated on an extensive scale with tractors and the motorised header-harvester - a machine that was able to reap a crop before it was fully ripe, harvest a knocked down crop, and separate straw and grain. Wool also reached high prices in the 1920s. Wool from Yalla-y-Poora, for instance, made a world record of 51s. ½ d. in 1924, which stood as an Australasian record for twenty years.[28]

The Willaura Farmer newspaper closed in 1921. Premises to house the Willaura fire station were constructed next to the post office in 1922. The Willaura Bush Fire Brigade was formed in 1933. From 1938, Dr Cyril Checchi, who had arrived in Willaura in 1920, led a movement to get a water supply for the township, which at that stage relied on dams and rainwater tanks. A bush nursing hospital was opened at Willaura in 1935. Electric light was connected to the township in 1938. On January 14 1944, a fire from the Grampians travelled towards Glenthompson and Lake Bolac. Three homesteads and 8,000 sheep were lost in the Willaura police district in the blaze.[29]
For the most part, closer settlement as an active government policy was wound down from 1938; however, another phase of soldier settlement commenced after World War Two. In the municipality, because of larger blocks and more intensive support and training, this scheme was more successful than that which followed World War One. Soldier settlement was facilitated with the assistance of Returned Sailors’ Soldiers’ and Airmens Imperial Leagues (RSSAILAs). The Willaura RSSAILA Sub-Branch submitted a list of properties totalling 25,600 acres that it deemed suitable for settlement, including land on Edgarley, Narrapumelap, Yarram Park and Toora. It was also noted that homesteads at Berrambool, Narrapumelap and Burumbeep stood vacant. Subsequently, 120 former servicemen settled on 80,000 acres excised from eight large properties in the Willaura-Streatham-Wickliffe area: Burrumbeep, Narrapumelap, Berrambool, Yalla-y-Poora, Blythvale, Edgarley, Nerrin Nerrin and Bushy Creek, where they mostly took up grazing and mixed farming.

A Soldier Settlement office was established in Willaura to facilitate the settlement. Berrambool, Narrapumelap and Burumbeep homesteads provided temporary housing for settler families whilst other housing was constructed. In addition, a portion of the Edgarley, 5,101 acres near the Willaura township, was subdivided in 1946 into eight allotments. The land was described as suitable for sheep grazing, mixed farming and cereal growing by the Soldier Settlement Commission. Today, plaques mark soldier settlement estates at Berrambool, Edgarley, Burrumbeep, Trawalla South and Nerrin Nerrin.

The phase of soldier settlement corresponded with good seasons, the post World War Two economic boom, and, from 1940, ‘ley’ farming (where crop planting is alternated with a forage legume for grazing, such as clover), which greatly increased wool production and wheat yields per acre. This era brought significant wealth and growth to Willaura. The Moyston-Willaura Road became known locally as ‘Toorak Road’ because of the substantial homes and farms established there during this period. With the economic boom and growth in district population following World War Two, a number of building projects were undertaken in Willaura. A reticulated water supply was established in Willaura in 1949. The Country Fire Authority built a new fire station at Willaura in 1956, the Willaura Memorial Hall opened in 1957, and new classrooms, staffroom and office were constructed at Willaura State School in the same year, with another classroom added in 1964. An Infant Welfare Centre opened in 1959. A scout hall was built in the early 1960s.

Tamara Beggs and Malcolm Fraser, later Prime Minister of Australia, were married at the All Saints Anglican Church in Willaura in 1956.

The Victorian Grain Elevators Board, established in 1935, introduced bulk-handling facilities for wheat; in the 1939-40 season the Board commenced operations as the sole bulk handler of wheat. Concrete silos and weighbridges were erected at railway stations, followed by steel silos constructed by the Grain Elevators Board to handle the bumper crops of the 1950s and 1960s. In the 1962-63 season, wheat deliveries at silos at Tatyoon measured 271,711 bushels; at Westmere 408,584 bushels; and at Willaura 350,218 bushels. Steel silos were built at Willaura in 1963. Bulk handling of oats commenced in 1962 and a number of oats storage sheds were built in the study area, including a shed at the Willaura railway station complex in 1964.

The construction of a six million gallon service basin, named the Checchi Reservoir, was undertaken in 1962 to improve water supplies to Willaura and other townships. A swimming pool opened in 1965. Willaura was connected to sewerage in 1966. Housing Commission Elderly Citizen flats were erected in 1973.

Major extensions to the hospital were undertaken in 1976 and the nursing hostel was built in 1994.

Fires occurred in the Grampians in 2006, when 26 homes, 129,000 hectares of land, thousands of stock and fences were burnt. Begun by a lightning strike on 19 January 2006, on 22 January the fire spread rapidly in a southerly direction towards Dunkeld, reaching the outskirts of Willaura before a strong wind took the fire back in a northeasterly direction, affecting a number of small communities along the eastern side of the Grampians. A man and his son died between Moyston and Pomonal when they were caught in the fire. A memorial has been erected near the place they died. In Willaura, the cenotaph was refurbished in memory of the 2006 fire.
In recent years, Grain Corp has established grain bunker facilities at Willaura.

Aggregation of farms into larger holdings from the 1960s has resulted in an ongoing reduction of population in the district. With the removal from town of major employers such as the PMG, the railways, and the Ararat Shire depot in the 1980s, this trend has continued. Today cropping and wool growing are still the district's mainstays, and while many of the town's shops and former businesses have closed, there remains a strong community and a range of essential services.[38]

Precinct History

Town Centre Willaura history

In 1883, the Wickliffe Road settlement, on the Ararat-Portland railway line, had a population of 30, two salt factories to the south, a hotel, a part-time school, a store, a few cottages, and a railway station. In 1890, Wickliffe Road State School had 55 pupils in attendance. In 1901, the population of the town consisted of four families belonging to two railway gatekeepers, the stationmaster and the schoolmaster.[39]

With the advent of share farming from 1897 on Mount William and Edgarley, rapid progress was made in the district. The Wickliffe Road State School was enlarged to about three times its original size and the Colonial Bank opened a branch in the township.

In June 1902 grazier Charles Ayrey sold his land, which was originally part of Greenvale estate. Some of the land, situated opposite the Wickliffe Road railway station, was subdivided into township blocks. Buyers from Melbourne, Bendigo and the Wimmera paid up to Â£45 for one quarter of an acre facing the railway reserve. The advertisement for the land sale read:

TOWNSHIP of AYREY, WICKLIFFE-ROAD. WEDNESDAY, JUNE 4. SPLENDID BUSINESS and RESIDENTIAL SITES.

MR. ARTHUR MURPHY, Instructed by Charles Ayrey, Esq., will SELL (through Mr. T. Gibson, auctioneer), in conjunction, at the township, on Wednesday, June 4, at half-past three o'clock.

Trains leave Ararat at 2 p.m., and Hamilton at noon, arriving at Wickliffe-road at 3 p.m. and 2 p.m. respectively.

Mr. Murphy has every confidence in drawing the special attention of business people and speculators to the above important sale of township lots, which range in size from a quarter of an acre to two acres, and several larger blocks ranging from 10 to 13 acres, situated immediately behind the smaller lots.

The allotments are immediately in front of the Wickliffe-road railway station.

The land is selling rapidly in the district, and the town has every promise of becoming an important business centre.

Mr. Murphy has just succeeded in disposing of 23,000 acres of the Greenvale and Mr. Ayrey's properties to some of the best and most successful farmers in the Wimmera and other districts, who are in all cases building and making homes on the land, thereby ensuring a large number of settlers who will all be within a short distance of the township blocks now offered for sale. On the Mount William Estate, in the immediate vicinity, 22,000 acres have been leased to agriculturists, and also large areas on Edgarley and other adjoining estates have been cut up for similar purposes. This means that the produce of some 70,000 acres of land will be trucked from the Wickliffe-road railway station.
It will, therefore, be seen that there is every prospect of the township of Ayrey, Wickliffe-road becoming a thriving centre, and a splendid opportunity is offered to tradesmen, business people, and others.[40]

Before the end of the month, builders were erecting shops and houses. Ayrey wanted to name the town after himself, but this never eventuated.[41]

The sale of Mount William estate in October 1906 resulted in further subdivision with farms sold at between Â£6-Â£7 an acre. The land sales and leasing of land to farmers in the district transformed Wickliffe Road into a busy township.

The newspaper, the Willaura Farmer, commenced operation on 1 June 19 1906, and described Willaura at that time: 'It includes the Junction Hotel, Incledon's coffee palace, dining rooms, three blacksmith's establishments, two fruiterers [and] three general stores'.[42] Willaura was described by the Willaura Farmer on 1 June 1907:

Business houses which have been erected during the past twelve months include a general store, a baker's shop, a butcher's shop, a bootmaker's shop, two fruit palaces, two millinery and dressmaking establishments, two machinery depots, and a fertiliser shed. This, it must be admitted, is a wonderful record for a township which in 1900 was comprised of five families.During the past year Willaura has gained a new post office. The Railway Department has not been slow to recognise Willaura's progress. A new shunting line and siding for wheat stacking has been established to cope with the increased grain traffic. The department has given further evidence of its firm belief in the stability of the district by erecting a new and commodious dwelling for the stationmaster, and will shortly convert the old residence into an up-to-date railway station. A police station is now in course of erection, and the time is not far distant when the police court will be held locally. Saleyards were established locally during the year, and stock sales are now conducted regularly in the town. The drainage of the town has been sadly neglected, and a windmill has been erected presumably to annoy the townspeople. The drainage question is still demanding the attention of the Shire Council, which is being spurred into action by the Public Health Department at the instance of the Progress Association.[43]

In 1911, eighty more allotments were made available by the sale of T Wileman's land on the north side of the township.[44]

In January 1912, a fire burnt through the west side of Main Street, Willaura, causing Â£10,000 worth of damage. As Willaura had no fire brigade, the licensee of the Willaura Hotel, J J Fitzgerald, paid for a special train to bring the Ararat Fire Brigade to the town to fight the fire. The Edgarley station and Maroona fire brigades also attended, however thirteen buildings were destroyed between Lang's blacksmith's shop on the south and Ford brothers shop and residence on the north; these comprised Crang's general store, Fitzgerald's tailor's, Sack's jeweller's, Murphy's hay and corn store, Wileman's billiard saloon, Gray's tobacconist's, Hartnell's auction office, Marshall's saddlery, Crane's butcher shop, McLennan and Crane's auction rooms, tea rooms, Sutton's bakery, and the Bank of Victoria.[45] Another fire on the west side of Main Street in January 1916 destroyed the Willaura Hotel, Kerr's hairdressers and tobacconist's, Luizzi's fruit and confectionary shop, Lang's blacksmith's and Young Brothers auctioneers' office.[46] This event instigated the establishment of the Willaura Fire Brigade in the same year.

Most of the town centre commercial buildings that make up the heritage precinct on the west side of Main Street were therefore constructed after the period 1912-16. Business premises on the east side of Main Street were constructed on leased railway land from 1910. With the advent of the post World War Two economic boom, some new construction of business premises was undertaken on the northern end of the east side of Main Street in the 1940s and 1950s, where buildings had fallen into disrepair.

The Main Street buildings continued to house various businesses until the 1970s when commercial activity in the township began to decline and some commercial buildings were removed from their location on the railway reserve. Business decline was associated with the depopulation of the district caused by farm amalgamation and the increasing use of large farm machinery leading to the employing of fewer workers. In addition, following Henry Bland's watershed
Report of the Board of Inquiry into the Victorian Land Transport System of 1971-72, a severe reduction in rail services was implemented throughout the state. Eventually the infrastructure required to provide a traditional rail transport system in many regional areas, including Willaura, was closed down or was drastically reduced.

From 1985 further depopulation occurred, leading to a decline in the physical assets of the town including shops and houses. There is now reduced use of buildings as fewer clubs meet and less public events are held.[47] Most of the commercial buildings that form the Willaura Town Centre Heritage Precinct stand empty.

Precinct building histories

The Willaura Town Centre Heritage Precinct comprises properties fronting the west side of Main Street, being 40-78 Main Street; and properties fronting the east side of Main Street, constructed on leased railway land, being 49-65 Main Street.

Former CBC Bank, 78 Main Street:

The Commercial Banking Company of Sydney opened on 1 November 1834. It merged with the Bank of Victoria Ltd on 1 January 1927 and became known as the CBC. In 1981, the CBC merged with the National Bank of Australasia to become the National Australia Bank.

In 1907 a branch building for the Colonial Bank of Australasia was erected at 42 Main Street, Willaura, and was occupied by the Bank of Victoria from 1919 until 1927 - thereafter becoming the CBC. The Willaura branch of the CBC closed on 6 July 1942, but re-opened in 1956 pending new premises planned at 78 Main Street.[48] The construction of new premises at this address reflected the increased business activity facilitated by the post-World War Two economic boom.

It is believed the bank building, known as the National Australia Bank from 1981, closed ca. 2000.

A bluestone drain is situated between 76 and 78 Main Street (north of and next to the bakery), on council owned land. Because of its proximity to a lignum swamp, drainage of the township of Willaura was a significant issue from the time of the establishment of the settlement in 1877 with the arrival of the railway. After the town was surveyed in 1902 and the population increased, a series of brick drains were constructed by the Ararat Shire council in 1914-17, however these did not altogether alleviate the problem. In 1915, for example, the Hopkins brothers of Willaura wrote to the Ararat Shire council drawing attention to the very bad state of the road in front of their business premises, and also the whole main street from Fitzgerald's Hotel to Gordon's and Rankin's. They complained that large pools of water lay in front of their premises due to bad drainage. An open drain, in place by 1916, channelled stormwater across Main Street into another drain under the railway line that then ran into the lignum swamp behind the railway station. Willaura's 'famous street gutter' had to be negotiated by all traffic that travelled down Main Street.

After repeated requests from the Willaura Progress Association, the drain across Main Street was covered over during a substantial street rebuilding program in 1953.

This drain, lined with bluestone pitchers, is evidence of the early drainage system.

The Willaura Bakery at 76 Main Street was opened in 1907 by Mrs A L Chew. The building was rebuilt after the 1912 fire, has been used as a bakery since that time, and continues to operate today.

The former store at 74 Main Street was demolished in August 2013.

The Willaura Milk Bar at 68 Main Street was built after the 1912 fire and operated as Robinsons greengrocers from
the late 1920s with an ice cream room and library room.[49] The milk bar that operated from the building closed in 2012.

The Willaura Hobby Boutique at 66 Main Street was formerly a draper's shop at the Mafeking goldfields. It was relocated from Mafeking (presumably after the 1912 fire in Willaura) and used as Willaura's Grano and McCarthy solicitors' office up until ca 15 years ago. It has been a hobby boutique for about the last year.[50]

The former store and residence at 64 Main Street, built after the 1912 fire, was Lardner's Newsagency and Department Store, which commenced business in 1936 and closed in 2008 after 55 years of operation by the Lardner family.[51]

The former Willaura Motors building at 58 Main Street, built after the 1912 fire, was opened as a garage by Barry McDonald ca 1919 and was run by the McDonald family until 2010 when it closed.[52]

The former Peter Chiller Insurance building at 44 Main Street was originally the Young Brothers Auctioneers office, built in 1916 after the fire of that year, on land belonging to Willaura Hotel. The office was used in later years by Denny Lascelles Stock Agents until the 1980s, then taken over by Peter Chiller insurance broker, who operated from the premises until the mid-1980s.[53]

Willaura Hotel 44 Main Street:

The Junction Hotel was built on this site in 1878 before the official survey of the township had taken place. The hotel stood at the junction of Mount William, Greenvale and Edgarley runs. The Wickliffe Road settlement, as it was then known, developed around the hotel. In 1916, a fire destroyed the hotel and new premises were built by owner Thomas Wileman in the same year.[54]

In February 1916, the Camperdown Chronicle reported that:

The first steps towards the erection of a new hotel for Mr Fitzgerald on the site of his former structure at Willaura have been taken. The old material is being disposed of and is being removed, while plans for a substantial brick structure are being prepared. Tenders will be closing during the next few days. Mr J. Irwin of Ararat is the architect.[55]

The Ararat Advertiser wrote in March 1916 that:

The tender of Mr E A Patterson, builder, of Hamilton, at £482 4s, has been accepted for the erection of a new brick hotel at Willaura, to take the place of the one recently destroyed by fire. The new building is to be replete with every convenience, and having 23 bedrooms, four parlors, two large dining rooms, billiard room, bar, cellar, kitchen and all the necessary bathrooms, pantries, store rooms, etc. A start will be made with the work immediately under the direction and supervision of Mr James Irwin, who is the architect.[56]

The new hotel building also housed a chemist shop on the north end of the building and a barber shop on the south end. The chemist, run by David McGregor, was taken over by Portland Wool Brokers in the 1960s.

Walter Lindrum, world billiards champion, played several tournaments in the hotel.[57] The hotel continues to operate today. The barber shop now houses the ladies toilets. The stables remain in situ at the rear of the hotel.

Colonial Bank 42 Main Street:

The Willaura branch building of the Colonial Bank was designed by architect James Irwin of Ararat.[58]
On 26 July 1907, the Willaura Farmer reported that:

The Colonial Bank of Australasia had decided to erect more commodious and up-to-date premises. It will be an eight roomed building with all modern conveniences for the manager and staff. The tender of Mr W F Allen of Horsham has been accepted for Â£1097 and the interior fittings from Mr G N Bell of Richmond for Â£267. It will be finished in four months and should be available to use by December this year. A most imposing structure highly ornamented rustic block fronting with decorative triangular fittings over the windows and doors in Greek style, and immediately under the top most pediment a steel coat of arms richly embossed, ornamented vases on each corner, chimneys cemented to give the appearance of freestone; the interior fittings are cedar ornamented with brass plates, and the strong room is twelve feet by ten feet. A spacious veranda runs sixty-eight feet the entire length of the building and it was finished in a thorough and workmanlike manner.[59]

The building survived the 1912 and 1916 fires.

The Colonial Bank of Australasia was taken over by the National Bank of Australia in November 1918. The Willaura branch of the National Bank closed on 6 July 1942. The building was stripped of its fittings and sold to become the local office of the Soldier Settlement scheme in the district. The building was purchased by the Walter family, who ran the garage next door, in the 1940s. It was acquired by the Willaura Sub-Branch of the Returned Sailors and Soldiers Imperial League of Australia (RSSILA) club in 1953 and was used as the local clubrooms. At about the same time, the bank manager's residence was removed from the site. The bank building was sold to the owners of the adjoining motor garage, Robinson and Jenkinson, in 1983 and used by them as a storeroom for machinery parts.[60]

Former Walter and Sons Pty Ltd and Smash Repairs 40 Main Street: F R Wilton, blacksmith, took over this site from J Coad in 1907, and by 1916, Mrs Lang conducted a blacksmith business from the premises. In the same year, the premises were destroyed by fire. New premises were built by Mr McIntosh, who established a wheelwright and carriage business on the site. It is believed that the site was taken over by William Walter and his brother, Charles Albert Walter, ca 1917 after they had dismantled and sold an iron shop and two iron sheds in Willaura. These buildings were most likely used for their sawmilling business, established in 1914 on vacant land next to the Catholic church, where they milled trees from the Barton Estate at Moyston. The Walter family came from Hamilton where they operated a produce and farm machinery business in Hamilton until it burnt down in 1914.[61] The Walter family extended their Main Street, Willaura premises in the 1930s and established a fuel and transport depot, where firewood was delivered to Melbourne by truck and fuel transported back to Willaura. In 1936, the business was expanded to incorporate farm machinery sales, which were conducted until the 1970s. The back section of the building was extended in the late 1940s and a workshop was built at the rear of the premises in the early 1950s, the same time that changes were made to the building's facade. A skillion extension was added to the building in the early 1960s. The Walter family sold the business in 1980. Robinson and Jenkinson purchased the business and added a panel shop, RACV services and a fertiliser spreading business. The business closed in 1991 and the building is currently used for storage.[62]

War Memorial in front of 49 Main Street

The Willaura Sub-Branch of the Returned Sailors and Soldiers Imperial League of Australia (RSSILA), which became the Returned Services League of Australia (RSL) in 1965, erected a memorial in Main Street in 1922 to those district residents who served in World War One. The memorial, which cost Â£200, was unveiled by R A Sinclair in 1923. A panel registering the fallen soldiers of World War Two was added in later years. The original mesh fence was removed in the mid-1980s and a rising sun motif was installed on the surrounding footpath in 2008.[63]

Courthouse 49 Main Street

With the opening of a police station in Willaura in 1905, it was evident that a courthouse was required in the district.
In 1908, agitation for courthouse premises for Willaura was taken up by the local newspaper and residents. In August of the same year, the *Horsham Times* reported:

> The cutting up of the big estate around Willaura has transformed a wayside station into a busy country town. An indication of its importance is furnished by the fact that the Crown Law authorities have acceded to a request to establish a court of petty sessions in the town.[64]

The first Court of Petty Sessions was held in the Willaura Hall, rented at Â£10 per year, on 19 August 1908.[65]

In July 1912, a tender for the erection of a courthouse on part of the former Willaura State School site was let to Mr M Gilmour, a local contractor, for Â£385. The building was of timber construction. By 21 February 1913 the new courthouse was nearly ready for occupation.[66]

The courthouse at Willaura was closed at the end of 1967 and all cases were then heard at the Ararat Magistrates Court.

The courthouse building was relocated to the railway reserve in 2009-10 when the CFA purchased the original courthouse site for the construction of new CFA premises. The courthouse building is currently used by the Willaura and District Historical Society.[67]

The corrugated iron shed at 55 Main Street (Lot 3) on railway land was originally built by the Hopkins brothers as a bulk store and is believed to date from the 1920s. A store room owned by Hopkins Co Merchants was in existence at this address in 1923, as was a bootmakers and agent's office.[68] The Hopkins brothers owned a grocery in Willaura and built this shed to store their goods. It is now used to garage buses.[69]

The former butcher's shop at 61 Main Street on railway land is believed to have been constructed in the late 1940s as a garage, then taken over by the McDonalds (of Willaura Motors) and used as a Shell petrol depot from the late 1950s. The building was used as a butcher's from the 1970s.[70] It is currently vacant.

The Willaura Pharmacy Depot at 63 Main Street on railway land was opened in 1910 by J W Patterson to conduct his business in plumbing and tank making. Mervyn Cooper took over the plumbing business and operated from the premises in the 1950s. The shop remained empty for some time until it was opened as a chemist in 1968.[71]

The former store at 65 Main Street on railway land operated as Reid's Ice-cream shop in the 1950s. It then became a fish and chip shop, which closed in the mid-1980s. It is now used as a residence.[72]

[1] Aboriginal clan boundaries are taken from Ian Clark in *Historic Places Special Investigation South-Western Victoria Descriptive Report*, (Melbourne, Vic.: Land Conservation Council, January 1996), 25. These are generalised descriptions only and bear no relation to current Native Title Claim boundaries. Aboriginal clan names are those used by present-day Traditional Owner groups.


[3] The term 'squatter' first applied to those pastoralists who took illegal possession of land before depasturing licences were introduced in 1836. Its meaning was broadened in later years to refer more generally to those who undertook sheep and cattle grazing under license on large tracts of land.


[10] Ibid., 72-3.


[12] Information from Ararat Rural City Heritage Study Stage 1 Community Meeting, Willaura, 30 May 2012.


[23] Ibid., 235.


[26] Banfield, *Like the Ark...The Story of Ararat*, 130.

[28] Banfield, Like the Ark...The Story of Ararat, 131-2.


[31] Banfield, Like the Ark...The Story of Ararat, 130.


[33] Banfield, Like the Ark...The Story of Ararat, 136.

[34] Information from Ararat Rural City Heritage Study Stage 1 Community Meeting, Willaura, 30 May 2012.


[42] Ibid., 62,76.

[43] Cited in Ibid., 76.


[46] Ibid., 128.


Ibid.

Casey Tomkins, "Fifty Five Years as Willaura's Newsagent." The Ararat Advertiser, 12 December 2008, 14.

Robinson and Walter, Personal Communication.

Ibid.


"Local and General News." The Ararat Advertiser, 14 March 1916, 2.


, The Horsham Times, 19 July 1907, 2.

Cited in Goeman et al., The History of Willaura and District 1835-1985, 109.

Ibid.


Robinson and Walter, Personal Communication.

Goeman et al., The History of Willaura and District 1835-1985, 141. and Robinson and Walter, Personal Communication.

"General News." Horsham Times, 7 August 1908, 8.

Goeman et al., The History of Willaura and District 1835-1985, 114.

Ibid., 113-14.

Robinson and Walter, Personal Communication.


Robinson and Walter, Personal Communication.

Ibid.

Ibid.
Description

Physical Description

Precinct Extent

The Willaura Town Centre Heritage Precinct extends along Main Street between Station Street and Warranooke Street on the west side and between 49 Main Street and Delacombe Way on the east side. The contributory properties in the precinct are located at 40, 42, 44, 55, 57, 58, 61, 63, 64, 65, 66, 68, 74, 76 and 78 Main Street and the war memorial, street trees and the bluestone drain located between 76 and 78 Main Street are also included as contributory features.

Urban Design Features

The precinct consists of single storey early twentieth century and inter-war and post-World War Two, predominantly commercial buildings, constructed to the street line with verandahs over the footpath. The exception to this is the former courthouse, which has been relocated from another site and located set back from the street on an open section of railway land. Due to the large set back of this building it contributes little to the streetscape. The buildings are generally closely spaced but some have large side yards giving an appearance of spaciousness to parts of the precinct. There are also a couple of empty sites where early buildings have in recent years been demolished. The side yards adjacent to the buildings generally have fences to the street elevation, and these are a mixture of types but generally solid with timber or metal cladding. The contributory buildings to the south and on the west side of Main Street face an open area of railway land on the east. As a result there is a longer stretch of buildings on the west side compared to the east side. The section of the east land contained in the precinct contains the relocated weatherboard courthouse and the granite war memorial on the nature strip. Main Street is wide with concrete kerb and channel and an asphalt footpath and crossovers on the west side and a concrete path on the east side. Both sides have a small grassed nature strip with the east side containing more substantial specimen plantings on the nature strip than the west side.

Significant Property Features

The streetscape has a consistent appearance containing mostly commercial buildings from the early twentieth century and inter-war period. Buildings predominantly have a pitched verandah over the footpath and a tall stepped parapet clad in lightweight material. The commercial buildings are single or double fronted with the exception of the Willaura Hotel, which has a long frontage to Main Street. Two distinctive smaller buildings are the former Mafeking goldfields building at 66 Main Street, which is at a smaller scale than the other buildings and the brick office at 44 Main Street, which has a grander appearance with its tall brick parapet with pilasters and orbs at the top. Buildings are generally timber framed with lightweight cladding including corrugated iron, fibre cement sheet and weatherboard, however there are a small number of brick buildings and one mudbrick building. The roofs behind the parapets are predominantly gables and hips, clad in corrugated galvanised iron. The buildings have little adornment or signage with the former Colonial Bank at 42 Main Street containing the greatest level of decoration with its intricate timber cornice and pediments over the windows. The Willaura Hotel also stands out in the precinct as a red brick building with a tall, ornate brick and render parapet. Many of the shops retain their original instep (recessed) entries, stall boards (wall below the windows) and plate glass shop front windows. These original features, along with the verandahs and parapets are particularly important in demonstrating the early twentieth century and inter-war and post-World War Two construction date of the buildings and contribute to the distinctive historic character of the streetscape.

Individual Property Descriptions
West side of Main Street from north end

Bluestone Drain: Contributory

The drain is situated between 76 and 78 Main Street Willaura (north of and next to the bakery), likely on Council owned land. It is a bluestone and concrete spoon drain that runs the east-west length of the land beside the Willaura Bakery. It drains stormwater and grey water from the area behind the bakery. The same drain runs under Main Street, under the railway line and takes the water into the swamp east of the town east.

78 Main Street: former CBC Bank: Contributory

The building at 78 Main Street is the former CBC Bank, a post-World War Two modernist building ca. 1956. The main building is cream brick with a low-pitched gable roof. The front facade is like a large rectangular billboard that extends past the sides of the building to the rear and forms a flat parapet at the top. At the centre there is a floor to ceiling opening that contains two identical windows with base boards side by side and double doors each with three vertically placed protruding square panels. The walls either side of this opening are rendered and unadorned. The parapet above the opening is framed and contains a row of rectangular reflective windows at the lower level and a band of metal cladding with vertical corrugations above this. The frontage is painted a deep cream colour.

Willaura Bakery 76 Main Street: Contributory

The building at 76 Main Street, Willaura is a weatherboard shop with a residence to the rear. The shop front has a central recessed entry with the early plate glass display windows and stall boards below. The main roof form is hipped with a gable to the front supporting the tall parapet. The parapet to the front is clad in pressed metal and has a curved gable form with pillars to the sides. Signage is painted directly onto the pressed metal. The apex of the gable and pillars contains a metal finial. The pressed metal clad pillars continue down to form pilasters either side of the shop front windows. There is a bullnose profile verandah over the footpath supported by square timer posts. The verandah ends have vertical timber valancing. The lower wings to the rear have hipped roofs. The roofs are clad in painted corrugated galvanised iron. The additions at the rear do not contribute to the streetscape.

Former store 74 Main Street: Non contributory - demolished August 2013

70 Main Street: Bendigo Bank: Non Contributory

Willaura Milk Bar (closed) 68 Main Street: Contributory

The building at 68 Main Street is a double fronted shop with a gable roof set behind a tall, stepped parapet. There is a side wing adjacent to the shop front, which may have originally contained a door. The shop front consists of a central recessed entry with plate glass shop front windows either side, which also angle towards the entry. There are highlight windows above and stall boards below. The strapped cement sheet cladding to the walls and the exposed rafters to the side eaves indicate a construction date around the 1920s. There is a, taller gable roofed section to the rear, which forms the residential section of the building. There is a skillion verandah to the front, which is not original, although this building would have originally had a front verandah. The lacework brackets to the posts are not original and not in keeping with the age of the building.

Willaura Hobby Boutique 66 Main Street: Contributory

The building at 66 Main Street is a single fronted shop relocated from the Mafeking goldfields. It has a gable roof clad in corrugated galvanised iron with a stepped gable form parapet to the front. The front elevation contains a square window divided into four panes and a narrow single door made up of vertical timber, which is ledged and braced at the back. The
front elevation is clad with weatherboards and the side elevations are clad with corrugated iron with the corrugations running horizontally. There is a simple skillion verandah over the footpath, which was most likely added when the shop was relocated. The scale of the shop with its low ceiling height as well as the original door and window demonstrates its early age and it is therefore an important example of an early commercial building formerly used on the goldfields.

Former store and residence 64 Main Street: Contributory

The building at 64 Main Street comprises two shops with a residence at the rear. The building has mudbrick walls and hipped roofs clad in corrugated galvanised iron. The front section containing the shops has a large hipped roof terminating in a gable at the front that supports the stepped parapet. The parapet is clad in pressed metal. The two shop fronts are not symmetrical. Both shops have recessed entries but one shop has a single entry with wide shop front windows and the other shop contains a double door entry with a smaller shop front window. The shop front windows retain their original vertical transoms and the separate highlight windows. Other original features include the stall boards below the windows, half glazed panel doors and highlight windows above the doors. There is a skillion roofed verandah over the footpath with vertical timber ends and square timber posts.

The mudbrick residence to the rear runs perpendicular to the front shop and has a hipped roof with a bullnose hipped front verandah facing the side yard. The front of the dwelling contains a central door with a timber framed double hung window either side. There are original timber framed double hung windows to the rear of the residence also.

Former Willaura Motors 58 Main Street: Contributory

The building at 58 Main Street is a motor workshop with a double shop front and verandah. It is an unusual design with the verandah designed to accommodate the central vehicular entry. The building has a gambrel hipped roof clad in corrugated iron and the walls are also clad in corrugated iron with the exception of the front elevation which is weatherboard, including the tall parapet. The parapet is square with a central elliptical pediment. The Willaura Motors sign is framed and mounted centrally on the square section of the parapet. The shop front contains a large plate glass window either side of full height double doors. The windows each have three highlight windows. There is a skillion roofed front verandah across the front. The central section of the verandah roof is elevated and flat to allow for vehicular access. The verandah is supported on square timber posts with simple decorative timber corner brackets. There is a central crossover in the footpath in line with the vehicular entry doors. There is also a petrol bowser mounted on the kerb in front of one of the shop front windows.

Former Peter Chiller Insurance 44 Main Street: Contributory

The building at 44 Main Street is a red brick office building with a prominent tall, curved render parapet with a moulded cornice and tall pillars either side topped by a projecting cornice and round render finials. The front elevation contains a paneled door to one side with a highlight window and a centrally placed vertically divided timber framed window on the other side. There are also highlights to this window. The pillars to the parapet extend down to form pilasters to the front elevation. The front and side parapets conceal the roof to the rear and a corbelled brick chimney extends out of one side wall. There is a simple skillion verandah over the footpath to the front with square timber posts.

Willaura Hotel and stables 44 Main Street: Contributory

The Willaura Hotel is a red brick building with a long elevation to Main Street. The main section of the hotel has a tall parapet across the front terminated by a tall curved panel at either end. The panels contain stucco festoon motifs with the insignia of the hotel at the centre. At one end of the frontage is a single fronted shop with a recessed entry and plate glass windows with a stall board below. This shop front as well as the front of the hotel sits under a wide bullnose profile hipped verandah. The verandah is supported on square posts with simple timber brackets at the corners. The front elevation has a render band at window sill level and at mid window height. The early windows are timber framed and
double hung. There are three entry doors along the main elevation. At the opposite end to the shop front is a skillion roofed brick room in line with the remainder of the front elevation. It has a single door with a highlight window and a window opening, which has been bricked up.

To the rear of the building are timber framed stables which are clad in corrugated, galvanised iron.

Former Colonial Bank of Australia 42 Main Street: Contributory

The former Colonial Bank of Australia at 42 Main Street is a symmetrical single-storey timber building with an elaborate facade in classical style erected in 1908. The front elevation has faux stonework timber paneling and the remainder of timber detailing on the facade is designed to look like stonework. There are central narrow double doors with pilasters either side and a tall transom and curved pediment. Either side of the entry is a pair of timber framed double hung windows with triangular pediments above. There is a parapet, which commences with a cornice with a frieze and drip moulds below. There is a skillion roof behind the parapet, which appears to be a later change and an early photograph of the building shows that it originally had a balustrade parapet with a central pediment. The side and rear elevations are clad in weatherboards. There is a narrow brick chimney on one side with a render cornice and terracotta chimney pot.

Former Walter and Sons Pty Ltd and Smash Repairs 40 Main Street: Contributory

The building at 40 Main Street appears to have been constructed as a car workshop. The earliest section is at the centre of the building and forms the main facade. This section is rendered brick with central folding doors and a plate glass window either side. The building is designed in the stripped classical style. There is a crossover to allow for vehicular access into the centre of the building from the street. On either side of this main facade are later additions, one in concrete block and the other in cream brick with a roller door entry. It is the central early faced with art deco features that contributes to the precinct streetscape.

East side of Main Street from south end

War Memorial Main Street: Contributory

The war memorial is located close to the street line with a hexagon shaped boundary fence of concrete bollards linked by steel rod. The memorial is a granite obelisk on a tall square plinth.

Former Willaura Courthouse Main Street (relocated): Contributory

The former Courthouse is a timber framed building with a Dutch gable roof clad in corrugated iron and weatherboard wall cladding. It is well set back from the street. The building is designed in the Federation style. There are two main wings to the building, one main wing running parallel with the street and a projecting wing to the front with a lower roof form. There is an entry door into both wings. Windows are timber framed and multi-paned, there is timber moulding band at window sill level and there is a skillion verandah over the front double entry into the main wing. There are decorative timber corner brackets to the verandah posts. On the main wing there are highlight windows above the verandah line. The roof has wide eaves with exposed rafters. There is a skillion wing at one end of the building.

Corrugated iron shed 57 Main Street: Contributory

The building at 57 Main Street is a gable roofed shed built up to the street line. The gable end faces the street. It is clad entirely in corrugated galvanised iron with metal lined large double doors to one side of the front elevation. At the centre of the gable end is a four paneled window.

59 Main Street - Non Contributory - empty site
Butcher 61 Main Street: Contributory

The building at 61 Main Street is a former butcher shop. It is constructed of concrete block and has a stepped parapet and skillion verandah to the front. The shop front is double fronted with a multi pane display window on one side and two doors separated by a small window on the other.

Willaura Pharmacy Depot 63 Main Street: Contributory

The building at 63 Main Street is a double fronted shop with weatherboard cladding to the front and corrugated iron cladding to the sides. The original shop front has been altered and now has glazed double doors across the front at the centre and floor to ceiling windows either side. The tall parapet is stepped with a central gable profile. The building has a gable roof behind the parapet, which is clad in corrugated galvanised iron with metal cylindrical roof vents. There is a flat roofed verandah over the footpath that is not original.

Former store and residence 65 Main Street: Contributory

The building at 65 Main Street comprises two shop fronts with a combined stepped parapet in front of a gable roofed residence. The shops have a single door each that are side by side with a plate glass window with stall board either side. The front elevation is clad in cement sheet as is the residence behind. The parapet is clad in metal sheet. There is a skillion roofed verandah over the footpath supported on square timber posts.

Statement of Significance

What is significant?

The Willaura Town Centre Heritage Precinct comprises the properties located at 40, 42, 44, 45, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78 and 79 Main Street and the war memorial, street trees and bluestone drain bounded by Station Street and Warranooke Street on the west side and 49 Main Street and Delacombe Way on the east side.

How is it significant?

The Willaura Town Centre Heritage Precinct is of local historic, aesthetic and social significance to Ararat Rural City.

Why is it significant?

The Willaura Town Centre Heritage Precinct is of local historical significance for its demonstration of the main settlement period in the history of the township in the early twentieth century and up to the post-World War Two period. The Wickcliffe Road settlement, as it was formerly known, had 30 residents in 1883, but after grazier Charles Ayrey sold his land, which was originally part of Greenvale estate in June 1902, the population expanded with some of the land, situated opposite the Wickliffe Road railway station, subdivided into township blocks. This, along with the advent of share farming from 1897 on Mount William and Edgarley, the 1904 Closer Settlement Act and the sale of the Mount William estate in October 1906 transformed Wickliffe Road into a busy township; by 1910 it was the second biggest receival centre for grain in the western half of Victoria. The consistency in the age of the buildings, which date from the 1910s and early 1920s demonstrates the speed with which the buildings were replaced in the main street after the 1912 and 1916 fires in order to continue servicing the prospering farming district. Due to the intactness of the streetscape from this early twentieth century period it is of historical significance for providing a snapshot of the composition and appearance of a town servicing a rural farming district from that period. The building at 66 Main Street is of historical significance as a remnant from the nearby Mafeking goldfields. The bluestone lined drain between 76 and 78 Main Street...
is of historical significance as a reminder of the drainage issues the town faced as a result of being located next to a swamp. (Criteria A & B)

The Willaura Town Centre Precinct is aesthetically significant as a collection of commercial and civic buildings from the early twentieth century and the inter-war and post-World War Two period that are visually unified by their age and common characteristics of siting, materials, scale and forms. The precinct is also aesthetically significant as a streetscape of substantially intact commercial buildings demonstrating key features of the early twentieth century and inter-war periods, including shaped parapets, instep entries, shop front windows with stall boards below and pitched roof verandahs to the front. The former Colonial Bank and the Willaura Hotel are of particular aesthetic significance for the elaborate detailing of their facades, the Bank with its intricate timber detailing and the Hotel with its dramatically shaped parapet with render decoration. Due to the intactness of the streetscape from the early twentieth century period, it is of aesthetic significance for providing a snapshot of the appearance of a rural farming town from that period. (Criteria D & E)

The Willaura Town Centre Heritage Precinct is of social significance as a social and community gathering place for the Willaura community and residents from the immediately surrounding districts. (Criterion G)

**Recommendations 2015**

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